The Dissertation Committee for Luana Barbosa Bessa certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Mulheres Brazucas: Identity Negotiation in the Immigration Experience of Brazilian Women

Committee:

Ricardo Ainslie, Supervisor

Kevin Cokley

Leslie Moore

Aaron Rochlen

Sonia Roncador

Mulheres Brazucas: Identity Negotiation in the Immigration Experience of Brazilian Women

By

Luana Barbosa Bessa, B.A., M.A.

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Dedication

Para Mamãe e Papai.

Thank you for the dignity, faith, hard work, self-respect, and love for family that you have modeled for me. This work would not be possible without your love and support.

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Mulheres Brazucas: Identity Negotiation in the Immigration Experience of Brazilian Women

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Luana Barbosa Bessa, Ph.D.

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This study draws from literature on acculturation, acculturative stress and gender roles as they relate to the experiences of Latin American immigrant groups. It focuses on Brazilian immigrant women, a group which has been understudied in psychological literature. This interview-based qualitative research project utilizes a phenomenological approach focusing on the personal lived experiences of Brazilian immigrant women in Texas and Massachusetts. Ten interviews were analyzed and five emergent themes were revealed. Results revealed ways in which women's immigration experiences intersect with their multiple identities, and the ways in which those identities are shaped and negotiated during the transformative immigration experience. The phenomenological approach is particularly suited to study the immigration experience, as this experience inherently involves issues of identity, transition and meaning-making within a particular contextual space.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

By the year 2042, non-Hispanic, single-race whites are expected to be the minority in the United States; by 2050, "minority" groups are estimated to make up 50% of the population, and one in three American residents are estimated to be Latina/o (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). The fast-growing Latin American population in the United States makes issues of immigration, identity, and adjustments particularly salient and relevant areas of research.

The migratory experience necessitates a renegotiation of one's identity and place in the world (Ryder et al, 2000). Among the multiple identities that are challenged and negotiated are gender roles. For Latina/o immigrants, women in particular may feel pulled by opposite expectations when it comes to gender roles, and a renegotiation of one's cultural values often leads to shifts in family dynamics (Ginorio, 1979). Differences in acculturation among family members have been linked to acculturative stress and family dysfunction (Hervis et al, 2009). Racial identity may also be challenged. In many Latin American countries, the concept of race is different from the black/white dichotomy that exists in the United States (Smart & Smart, 1995). Many immigrants thus find their racial identity challenged upon entering a new societal context. Finally, loss of social standing may be an important psychological hurdle for immigrants from middle or upper class backgrounds (Beserra, 2003).

Psychological research to date, while devoting considerable attention to other Latin groups in the acculturation literature, has only recently begun to look at the experiences of another fast-growing Latin population, comprised of Brazilian immigrants and Brazilian Americans (DeBiaggi, 2002). While Brazil, as a Latin American country, shares some cultural values with its neighbors, it also has a distinct national identity. Brazil is the largest country in South America, covering about half of its landmass. It is the fifth most populous nation in the world and holds a third of the population in Latin America (Schneider, 2010). Unlike their neighbors, Brazilians speak Portuguese and

generally do not identify with the label "Hispanic." The migration patterns of Brazilians to the United States are also distinct from those of other Latin American groups. Margolis (1994) calls Brazilian migration to the US the "tale of a new kind of immigrant" and the Brazilian immigrant population an "invisible minority." Given the unique characteristics of Brazil, coupled with the growing Brazilian presence in the United States, an investigation of Brazilian Americans and their experience in the United States is a relevant and important line of research. A psychological study of the lived experience of Brazilian immigrants will also help us as a field to better serve their needs in our communities. By having a better understanding of their experiences, we can not only recognize their needs, but also tailor our interventions appropriately and address any barriers to help-seeking that they may experience.

The current study draws from literature on acculturation, acculturative stress and gender roles as they relate to the experiences of Latin American immigrant groups. It focuses on Brazilian immigrant women, a group which has been largely invisible in the social science literature until recently. In fact, Brazilian immigrants as a group have been called "the invisible minority" (Margolis, 1994). The current study is an interview-based qualitative research project, utilizing a phenomenological approach, focusing on the personal lived experiences of Brazilian immigrant women in Austin, Texas as well as Boston, Massachusetts. Thirteen women were recruited for the study, with ten of those narratives being analyzed in depth. Interviews were analyzed with an emphasis on thick description (Geertz, 1973), emergent themes, and contextualization (Smith et al, 2009). I am interested in the ways in which women's immigration experiences intersect with their multiple identities (ex. racial identity, familial roles, gender role ideology, socioeconomic status, etc), and the ways in which those identities are shaped and negotiated. Five themes emerged from the data: immigration as a quest, divided self, sense of legitimacy and belonging, navigating relationships, and coping strategies. The phenomenological approach is particularly suited to study the immigration experience, as this experience

inherently involves issues of identity, transition and meaning-making within a particular contextual space.

Chapter 2. Background

Introduction

While Brazil, as a Latin American country, shares some cultural values with its neighbors, it also has a distinct national identity. Brazil is the largest country in South America, covering about half of its landmass. It is the fifth most populous nation in the world and holds a third of the population in Latin America (Schneider, 2010). Unlike their neighbors, Brazilians speak Portuguese and generally do not identify with the label *Hispanic*. The migration patterns of Brazilians to the United States are also distinct from those of other Latin American groups. Given the unique characteristics of Brazil, coupled with the growing Brazilian presence in the United States, an investigation of Brazilian Americans and their experience in the United States is a relevant and important line of research.

Brazilian immigration to the United States has been a growing phenomenon in the last three decades in particular. This migration began in earnest in the 1980s, a period referred to as the "lost decade," economically speaking, for many Latin American countries (Hayes, 1988). Brazilian immigration to the United States has been driven in large part by the economic instability of their home country, which was characterized in the 1980s by high inflation rates and low economic growth and in the 1990s by failed governmental economic plans (Amaral & Fusco, 2005). Brazilian migration continued to increase over the years, with Brazilians of a variety of socioeconomic status levels making their way to other countries, including Paraguay, Japan, and Europe, with most coming to the United States (Amaral & Fusco, 2005; DeBiaggi, 2002; Margolis, 1994).

According to Davis (1997), "the Brazilian population (documented and undocumented) is now a force with which the United States must reckon" (p. 13). Brazilian communities have been established throughout the United States, the most sizeable being in New York, Miami, and Boston, with estimated populations in those

cities ranging from 150,000 to 300,000 (Brazilian Consulate, 2000, as cited by Margolis, 2003; DeBiaggi, 2002). The Brazilian government estimated in 2007 that the Brazilian population in the United States numbered 1.1 million, which was at least four times the official census figures at the time (Bernstein & Dwoskin, 2007). This discrepancy may well be due to the large number of undocumented immigrants in the United States, as well as under-tracking of Brazilian respondents by the Census (Margolis, 2003; Siqueira & Jansen, 2008). Margolis (1994) estimates this undercount to have been by at least 80% in 1990. According to Zubaran (2011), the undertracking of Brazilians by the Census Bureau has serious implications, given that census data is used as a tool for policy decision making as well as resource allocation in many areas including mental health. If Brazilians are being systematically underrepresented in demographic data, they may very well be systematically disadvantaged when it comes to the provision of social services and attention to their needs apart from those of other Latin American groups. However, psychological literature has not paid due attention to this population, only recently beginning to examine Brazilian immigrant, or *Brazuca*, experiences.

Brazilian Identity

Mestizo psychology.

Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The concept of a *mestizo psychology* is relevant for Brazilians. According to Arredondo (2002), "all Latinos, culturally and historically, are mestizos," (p. 311) meaning that a binary conceptualization of race as a black/white dichotomy does not fit. In the colonization process in Brazil, the conquest of indigenous populations involved intermarriage between colonizers and colonized, imposing a patriarchal power structure on the colonization process itself (DeBiaggi, 2002; Korin, 1996). The patriarchal organization of the family with well-delineated gendered roles continues to be "an ideological model" in spite of regional and class differences in Brazil (DeBiaggi, 2002, p. 51).

Cultural Values.

Core values for tradional Brazilian culture are: familismo, personalismo, and respeito. The family unit is central in traditional Latin culture as well as in Brazilian culture in particular. The value of *familismo* (familism), characterized by loyalty to and solidarity with the family, is a strong cultural value that has been associated with a variety of Latin American groups (Arredondo, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2005; Korin, 1996). Familismo is characterized by a feeling of support and affiliation with family, as well as a sense of obligation and connection that focuses on interdependence. This cultural value may have implications for decision-making strategies, in the sense that adults may consult with family members before major decisions and generally involve family members in decisions to a greater extent than would be expected in the United States (Galanti, 2003).

Another core cultural value is *personalismo* (personalism), which treats relationships as primary even in the context of business and other non-familial or social relationships (Arredondo, 2002; Galanti, 2003; Korin, 1996). At the same time, r*espeito* (respect) requires consideration of others in relationships, including an interest in maintaining good social standing. Galanti (2003), in an overview of male-female traditional gender roles in Latin American families, emphasized the implications for the patient-doctor relationship of these core values.

Brazilian gender roles.

When it comes to gender role ideologies in Latin cultures, there tend to be distinct expectations that differ for women and men. The construct of *machismo* is a well-studied ideal that dictates appropriate male behavior in traditional Latin culture. Men are expected to be strong, dominant and decisive figures who act as head of the household and make major family decisions (Galanti, 2003; Montiel, 1973; Penalosa, 1968: Sue & Sue, 2008). They are also expected to be sexually aggressive, even unfaithful (Gil & Vazquez, 1997). The traditional conceptualization of *machismo* has been criticized for

being pathologizing and inaccurate, however (Cromwell & Ruiz, 1979; Ruiz, 1981, as cited in Sue & Sue, 2008). While *machismo* in its extreme negative form has been linked to substance abuse, domestic violence, and difficulty managing and expressing emotions (Barker & Lowenstein, 1997; KPNDC, 2001, as cited in Galanti, 2003), there are also some aspects to *machismo* which research has recently begun to acknowledge and explore as not being pathological. In acting on behalf of their families, men are also expected to provide for their families and defend their families from external threats. Men are seen as honorable when they protect the best interest of their families and stand by them (Galanti, 2003). *Machismo* has also been linked to "pride, dignity, and tenacity" (Mirande, 1985, as cited in Baldwin & DeSouza, 2001).

Women, on the other hand, are expected to uphold the standards of the less-studied construct of *marianismo*, or *modelo de Maria* (model of Mary) as it has been called in Brazil (Baldwin & DeSouza, 2001). The counterpart to *machismo*, *marianismo* is based on the Catholic conceptualization of the Virgin Mary. The traditional female gender role requires that women be submissive to their husbands, sexually chaste until marriage, nurturing and self-sacrificing to family (DeBiaggi, 2002; Galanti, 2003). They are seen as gatekeepers of sexual contact, their virtue being based upon a lack of sexual permissiveness. In a paradoxical relationship to *machismo*, *marianismo* entails a simultaneous self-abnegation and self-aggrandizement whereby the female is ostensibly subordinate, but also idealized and venerated. According to Baldwin and DeSouza (2001), *marianismo* "acts, on the one hand, as a shadow upon women, binding them to a traditional sense of womanhood, and, on the other hand, as a beacon, giving them unique sources of power in terms of Brazilian gender relations" (p. 10). While the male is seen as head of the household and patriarch of the family, the female assumes an almost divine role in the familial domain, reflecting the holy mother and the influence she is seen by Catholics to possess with God on behalf of humankind (Gil & Vazquez, 1997). She is often viewed as the emotional core of the family. The paradox of women's simultaneous submission and glorification plays out as women utilize indirect methods of asserting

power, subversively becoming "indispensable" in the family and domestic sphere (Rocha-Coutinho, 1999).

The Brazilian Immigrant Experience, or "Becoming *Brazuca*" (Jouët-Pastré, Braga & Suárez-Orozco, 2008)

The *Brazuca* profile.

Anthropologist Maxine Margolis has become a key voice in the growing literature on the study of Brazilian immigrants in the United States. In her landmark book titled *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilian Immigrants in New York City*, she details her findings from research conducted between 1988 and 1991. Cited heavily by other researchers focusing on Brazilian immigrants, Margolis provides a broad sketch of the *Brazuca* experience in New York and shows that preconceived notions about immigrants, as well as taken-for-granted facts that apply to other Latin American groups may not apply to Brazilian immigrants. Her interview and survey-based ethnography of 53 Brazilian immigrants in New York City revealed that her sample "belies the American stereotype of the 'illegal alien' as a young, uneducated male whose home is an impoverished village in rural Mexico" (p. xix). Margolis found that her sample came largely from middle and lower-middle class backgrounds, and that 31% had graduated from a university. She describes "the tale of a new kind of immigrant" who was fleeing economic instability and chaos rather than poverty or persecution (p. xx). According to Margolis (1994), middle-class migrants have become increasingly important sections of global migration movements. Brazilian emigration is cited as an example of migration driven in part by the disgruntled middle class, whose skills and education are necessary, but who discovered that the availability of jobs in their field with adequate compensation is lacking in their home country. She notes that education and training, coupled with a lack of professional opportunities, "shattered expectations for social mobility" (p. xvi).

Brazilian immigrants in the United States do a variety of labor tasks, including both skilled and unskilled labor. Due to the economic policies of the Brazilian government in the 1990s, even well educated Brazilian individuals found that they would have more financial success doing low-skilled work abroad than skilled work in their own country (Amaral & Fusco, 2005). Often, this employment pattern is the result of a lack of adequate English proficiency combined with a lack of proper documentation (Franklin, 1992, as cited in Korin, 1996; Margolis, 1994). Margolis (1994) points out that immigrant labor in the United States was most welcome in the second sector of unskilled labor. In her sample, over 80% of Brazilian immigrant women had worked in domestic service at some point since immigrating to the United States. Labor patterns were gendered, with domestic service accounting for 56% of jobs held by women, and restaurant work accounting for 30% of jobs held by men.

Goza (1994), in a comparative study examining Brazilian immigration to the United States and Canada, found similar patterns in his sample of 283 men and 107 women. Both men and women had more than ten years of formal education, on average, with 38% having the equivalent of a high school degree, 26% having at least some college education, and 10% having a four year college degree. All of the participants in his United States sample were able to find work. For women, over 55% of full-time positions paid between three and six dollars an hour; for men the mode was between six and twelve dollars an hour. Like Margolis, Goza found that menial labor was quite common, with the most common occupation being janitor in his sample. Men were often employed as dishwashers, landscapers and car washers; women as waitresses, cooks, babysitters and housekeepers.

As the Brazilian community has become more established, however, a growing number of Brazilians have become entrepreneurs. A report by the Mauricio Gaston Institute (Lima & Siqueira, 2008) estimated that Brazilian businesses in the United States account for $1 billion in annual sales. At the same time, about 31% of the jobs held by Brazilians were service occupations, followed by management, professional and other

related jobs (27%), transportation and material moving jobs (12%), and construction and maintenance (11%).

It is difficult to know the exact percentage of documented versus undocumented Brazilian immigrants. In Goza's (1994) sample, almost 80% "was in a relatively precarious situation" (p.143), either possessing expired visas or not possessing visas at all. Marcus (2009), on the other hand, found that 71% of his interviewees were documented. While exact percentages may vary among studies, researchers agree that there is a wide margin of undocumented immigrants, and that this fact plays a role in the undercount and "invisibility" of this population. Nevertheless, according to Marcus (1994), "Brazilian immigrants (documented or not) are indeed (re)producing spaces and retaining a very visible ethnic landscape in the United States" (p.177).

In Goza's (1994) sample of Brazilian immigrants, he found that women were significantly more likely to want to remain in the United States permanently (35%) than men (27%). This discrepancy fits with research suggesting that immigration for Latin American women often leads to more freedom in terms of gender role expectations and more financial autonomy when they work outside the home (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Min, 2001).

Sociologist Ana Martes (2011) complicates the picture of a bit when she states that based on her longitudinal study of Brazilians in the Massachusetts, "a typical study of the Brazilian immigrant does not exist." In her sample, the immigrants were relatively young, 62% in the 21 to 34 age group in 1996, and 60% in 2005. However, she found men and women in similar proportions, married and single people in relatively equal proportions, and immigrants with children both here in the United States with them and left behind in Brazil. Martes notes that her relatively even numbers of men and women (60% and 40% respectively in 1996) is in contrast to a study done in the late 1980s which reflects only 33% women, and suggests that the female population of Brazilian immigrants in Massachusetts is increasing. These numbers suggest several possibilities. It may be that more women are coming on their own to the United States, that more

families are coming together, and that for families where the man came first, there may be reunifications happening after a period of time.

Theoretical models of acculturation.

the classical definition.

The classical definition of *acculturation* was provided by a group of American anthropologists appointed by the Social Sciences Research Council to write a memorandum on the subject as an emerging field of study. This anthropological definition focused on group processes: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). In the memorandum, Redfield and his colleagues not only acknowledged the possible bidirectional pattern of change between the interacting groups, but also highlighted the fact that assimilation is but one aspect or phase of acculturation, characterizing the acculturation stance of acceptance. They also include adaptation as a possible result of acculturation, "where the original and foreign traits are combined so as to produce a smoothly functioning cultural whole which is actually an historic mosaic." However, in traditional psychological research on the acculturation processes for individuals, the original multifaceted meaning of acculturation has often been lost. The idea of the acculturation process producing a third cultural experience, born yet distinct from the two original cultures, is one that has resurfaced in recent years as concepts of biculturalism and cultural integration become increasingly hot topics.

acculturation in psychological research.

Although the definition given by Redfield and his colleagues (1936) does not emphasize a unidimensional view of the acculturation process, traditional psychological research on immigration and acculturation has nevertheless conceptualized the adaptation

process in terms of assimilation (Escobar & Vega, 2000; Reichman, 2006). From this unidimensional perspective, exposure to and identification with the host culture was presumed to correspond to a proportionate relinquishing of one's native cultural heritage. Measures utilizing this model assess acculturation linearly on a continuum from less to more acculturated, and individuals are assumed to progress along the continuum over time and across generations. More recent research utilizing the unidimensional approach has explicitly named biculturalism as the midpoint of the continuum (Ryder et al, 20002).

This view has been criticized, however, for being reductionistic at best and inaccurate at worst (Chun & Akutsu, 2005). Bipolar, single-dimension scales using this model are not recommended, as they equate acculturation to the dominant culture with a parallel disengagement with one's host culture (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007). Ryder, Alden and Paulhus (2000), in a study contrasting the unidimensional and bidimensional models of acculturation in the areas of personality, identity, and adjustment, found that the bidimensional model appeared to be more valid and useful in operationalizing the construct of acculturation, while the unidimensional model "offers an incomplete and often misleading rendering of the acculturation process" (p. 62).

One serious criticism of unidimensional models has been that bipolar, single-dimension scales, based on the unidimensional, linear model, have confounded two distinct groups (Berry, 1997, 2005a). With host culture identification at one pole and native culture identification at the other, the "bicultural" group in the middle may actually be comprised of two very distinct subgroups. That is, individuals may fall in the middle of the continuum because they identify strongly with both cultures, or because their cultural identification is not salient to them. They may be highly committed to a composite cultural identity (integrated/bicultural), or they may be disengaged from both cultures (marginalized). Berry (1997, 2005a), who has researched these subgroups over the past four decades, has found consistent patterns of acculturative stress differing by acculturation type, making the lumping together of these two subgroups particularly

problematic. A number of bidimensional scales have been constructed in an attempt to resolve the issues around unidimensional conceptualizations of acculturation.

The bidimensional model, in contrast to the unidimensional model, assumes that retention of the host culture is independent of host culture acquisition and should be measured independently. From this perspective, the acculturation process of an individual is not characterized by an inevitable path away from the native culture and toward the dominant host culture. Rather, it is characterized by an adaptive pattern which differs among different individuals, who may turn away from or toward either or both cultures. The bidimensional model takes into account the possibility that enculturation can occur, as well as acculturation. Enculturation involves an engagement with and identification with one's own culture, a turning toward which can occur even in a new cultural context. While acculturation is other-culture learning, enculturation involves learning about one's own culture.

Berry's acculturation framework (1989, 1997, 2006) is one oft-cited and widely researched bidimensional model. Berry (1989) proposes that acculturating individuals and groups face two important issues: the extent to which they are motivated to identify with and retain their native culture, and the extent to which they are motivated to identify with and be involved with the dominant host culture. In this formulation, acculturation does not simply refer to assimilation to the host culture; in fact, "acculturation can be 'reactive,'" (Berry, 2005a, p. 701), whereby the influence of the host culture is rejected, and there is not an inevitable move toward identification and involvement with the host culture over time. Berry utilizes a conceptual model which treats orientation toward issues of native culture retention and intergroup engagement as dichotomous, thus yielding four different acculturation modes, attitudes, or strategies, as the categories have been termed at different times (2005b).

Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) have unpacked the concept of acculturation even further. Honing in on the group that Berry identified as pursuing the "integration"

strategy, Benet-Martinez and Haritatos examine the complexity of the bicultural identity and argue that this group is not homogenous. They critique Berry's model for

> [failing] to describe *how* people go about integrating and maintaining the dual cultures and [doing] little to pinpoint individual or sociocultural antecedents that would explain why a given individual experiences biculturalism as 'a dichotomy and a paradox' and/or something that makes him or her feel both 'special and confused.' (p.1019)

Thus, while Berry's bidimensional model is useful and a great stride ahead of proxy variables or unidimensional models, it is nevertheless reductionistic when it comes to the bicultural experience.

While bicultural individuals may be similar in that they all attempt to integrate both cultures into their personal identities, they may vary widely in the extent to which they find the two cultures compatible with each other (and thus overlapping) and the extent to which they experience conflict between their two cultural orientations (that is, the extent to which the integration process is harmonious). Bicultural individuals thus differ not only in the choices they make about what to pull from which culture in particular circumstances and in their self-identification, but also in the extent to which they "create a synergistic, integrated cultural identity" (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007), which Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) have labeled as an individual's "bicultural identity integration" or BII. These researchers have pointed out that one key weakness in traditional acculturation research is that it "seems insufficient for capturing fundamental individual differences in the experiences and meanings associated with bicultural identity" (p.1019).

Given our increasing understanding of acculturation as a multidimensional, individualized process, as well as our recognition that different groups of immigrants have different cultural and immigration narratives, an investigation of the Brazilian immigrant experience needs to encompass a sensitivity to issues of meaning and

meaning-making defined as much as possible by Brazilian immigrants themselves. A qualitative phenomenological approach allows for such sensitivity on the part of researchers, so that we may remain open to the ways in which participants experience their reality and the words that participants use to language their experience. For a group that has largely been invisible and thus lacked a voice, it may be of particular importance to let participants speak for themselves and be aware of the ways in which their story is languaged. Gergen (1992), in discussing the absence of female stories in historical narratives, makes a point about identity development which is relevant to the invisibility of the female Brazuca experience in psychological literature to date: "How does one become when no story can be found?" (p.131). That is, how does one find their story, their voice, in a social and historical context whose history does not include or encourage it? The current study is a search for the female Brazilian immigrant story, and thus to her "becoming," that is, to her ongoing identity development.

Acculturation and stress.

culture shock.

The immigration experience necessarily calls for a renegotiation of one's identity and place in the world. According to Tosta (2004), "the immigrant is transformed" (p.579) by the migration process, even if unwittingly and despite her best efforts. Beserra (2003), in an ethnographic anthropological study of Brazilian immigration, explores the various factors that shape the Brazilian immigrant experience, which often include social class and the challenge of losing a particular standing in society. She tells the story of a Brazilian colonel who had to cope with the loss of his position. That is, where he was a colonel in Brazil and benefited from all the honors connected to the position, here he could hardly make himself understood. Despite such qualifications the only work he could find here was menial. In addition, his and his wife's relationship with their children, which they expected to be more like in Brazil, did not work out as such because

the children were already acclimated to American customs, and hardly included anything from Brazilian culture in their daily lives. (Beserra, 2003, p. 189)

Beserra's story illustrates not only the difficulty of negotiating one's identity in a foreign land, but also the challenge of relating to loved ones who are also undergoing their own processes of transition, change, and acculturation. In fact, differences in acculturation among family members have been linked to acculturative stress, given the conflicts that may ensue from lack of attunement and emotional alienation (Hervis et al, 2009).

Acculturative stress refers to the experiences associated with acculturation that are painful and disruptive to psychological well-being and functioning (Berry, 2005a). According to Kim's (1988) cross-cultural adaptation theory, the acculturation process tends to be more stressful when there is a wide discrepancy between the host culture and the culture of origin.

Allen, Amason, and Holmes (1998), in a study on the relationship between emotional acculturative stress and gender for Latin immigrants, emphasized that Latin immigrants may be particularly vulnerable to acculturative stress, given the disparity in values and behavioral norms between Latin culture and American culture. The authors draw on Kim's (1988) cross-cultural theory, which proposes that adaptation is more difficult for immigrants whose native culture differs significantly from the host culture. Smart and Smart (1995) define six general characteristics of Latin immigration to the United States which are distinct from European immigration and which promote acculturative stress, some of which are relevant for Brazilian immigrants: issues of race and racism, the strength of the Latin value of collectivism and family, and the stresses associated with undocumented status.

In Brazil and other Latin American countries, racial mixtures are the norm, and the very concept of race is different from the black/white dichotomy that exists in the United States (Arredondo, 2002; Smart & Smart, 1995). Hence, often times, Brazilian immigrants find themselves transitioning from majority to minority status as their racial

identity is challenged and shifted upon entering a new societal context. This shift can be disorienting. There may also be differences between the two cultures in the ways in which the self is linked with others. American culture tends to value individualism, self-reliance, and self-determination, whereas Latin culture tends to emphasize cooperation, collectivism, and the strong family ties that embody *familismo* (Arredondo, 2002; Smart & Smart, 1995). As family members acculturate at different rates, family bonds may be tested and strained.

Regarding the stresses of being undocumented, immigrants in this grey area often live in fear of deportation, do not have unrestricted access to employment, and may find it difficult to engage with the greater society due to feelings of mistrust and alienation (Smart & Smart, 1995).

relationship between acculturation and adjustment.

According to the assimilation model of acculturation, positive adjustment to the host culture was viewed as necessitating a process of assimilation into the "melting pot" that comprised American society (Escobar & Vega, 2000). However, research has not been conclusive when it comes to this relationship, Miranda and Matheny (2000) found that, for their first-generation sample of participants from twelve different Latin American countries, degree of acculturation was a predictor of acculturative stress, with more highly acculturated individuals experiencing less acculturative stress. Their sample endorsed a significant amount of acculturative stress, consistent with assimilation-model-based expectations for first-generation immigrants. However, while acculturation was found to be somewhat predictive of stress levels, the authors also argued that acculturative stress is not inevitable and is predicted by several other individual, familial, and demographic factors besides acculturation. Acculturative stress has been linked to: stress-coping resources, English proficiency, length of residence in the United States, family cohesion, economic status, immigration status, and education (Miranda & Matheny, 2000; Thomas, 1995).

Other research has suggested that higher acculturation does not necessarily equal better adjustment, and in fact, there has been some evidence to suggest that native-born Latinos have better psychological health than U.S.-born, presumably more acculturated, Latinos (Burnam et al, 1987, as cited in Organista et al, 2005; Ortega et al, 2000; Alderete et al, 2000; as cited in Escobar & Vega, 2000). Burnam et al (1987) found that Mexican Americans who had been born in the United States had higher rates of alcohol abuse and dependence, substance abuse and dependence, phobias, Major Depressive Disorder, and dysthymia, even after controlling for age, sex, and marital status. Organista, Organista, and Kurasaki (2005) point out two hypotheses for why immigrants might have better psychological health: it may be that those who migrate are a group pre-selected for psychological health, and it may be that the experience of living in America as a minority and perhaps discriminated ethnic group contributes to the poorer psychological health of Mexican Americans born in the United States.

A meta-analysis of the literature on acculturation and adjustment by Moyerman and Forman (1992) revealed that "the most notable aspect of the results is that there does not appear to be a consistent unidirectional effect of acculturation on adjustment" (p. 177). In an influential review of the literature, Rogler et al (1991, as cited in Organista et al, 2005) argued for greater methodological uniformity in the investigation of acculturation and mental health, in order to untangle the mixed results that have been obtained regarding the relationship between these two variables.

acculturation type and acculturative stress.

Some research, rather than focusing on level of acculturation, has focused on type of acculturation as it relates to acculturative stress. The value in this approach includes the possibility of helping to elucidate aspects of the relationship between these variables that are otherwise overlooked. Because acculturation is a multidimensional, nonlinear process, reducing it to a linear construct may be inappropriate. A perspective which encompasses multiple patterns of acculturation, rather than just assimilation, allows for a more textured understanding of its relationship to stress and adjustment.

Research has found consistent patterns of adjustment that differ by acculturation type (Berry, 1990; Berry & Sam, 1996; as cited in Berry, 1997; Berry, 1997, 2005a, 2006; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Integration, or biculturalism, appears to be the most adaptive strategy, whereas marginalization has been linked to the most acculturative stress. Separation and assimilation strategies appear to fall in the middle. These patterns have been found for acculturative stress as well as for other indicators of psychological well-being such as coping resources and social support (Berry, 1997, 2005a, 2006).

Although not all researchers have found the above patterns (Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987; Rotheram-Borus, 1990; as cited in Nguyen & Martinez, 2007), Nguyen and Martinez (2007) contend that this discrepancy in findings reflects the inconsistent and inaccurate ways in which biculturalism has been measured. Bipolar linear scales, which are reductionistic, measure biculturalism as the midpoint between both cultures. Based on a meta-analysis of 40 studies, Nguyen and Martinez argue that, when measured bidimensionally, biculturalism appears to have a significant moderate relationship ($r=0.23$) to better adjustment. They also propose that the negotiation of cultures involved in the acculturation experience is not inherently stressful, but may only be stressful "for those less oriented to their two cultures," that is, to marginalized individuals (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, forthcoming, as cited in Nguyen & Martinez, 2007).

An understanding of the complex interplay between engagement with the host culture and commitment to one's native culture is crucial in conceptualizing the immigrant experience. This perspective allows for a more nuanced discussion of identity negotiation, as well as a discussion of cultural differences and adaptation that does not pathologize the cultural "other."

Acculturation and cultural values.

negotiation of cultural values.

Acculturation to the dominant culture does not necessarily preclude retention of the host culture. Just as the acculturation process is not necessarily synonymous with assimilation, neither is it synonymous with a disregard for strong cultural values, although those values may be impacted. Marin and Gamba (2005), in conceptualizing acculturation as "culture learning" (p. 84) and cultural values as being maintained through a process of communication, argue that the experience of migration affects the maintenance and transmission of cultural values. To what extent cultural values are maintained may be related to their adaptiveness and attractiveness.

Familismo in particular appears to be a value that remains for generations in immigrant families (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002, as cited in Arredondo 2002). In a study of 452 Latinos and 227 non-Latino Whites, Sabogal and colleagues (1987, as cited in Organista et al, 2005) found that Latinos were more familistic than Whites at all levels of acculturation. However, certain aspects of *familismo*, such as sense of family obligation, decreased with acculturation, whereas perception of the family as highly supportive stayed constant. *Familismo* is one of the core values in Latin culture and may in fact serve as a protective factor when it comes to mental health and adjustment (Galanti, 2003; Organista et al, 2005).

It may be that, as individuals acculturate, they feel freer to choose those aspects of their culture that they wish to maintain, and those which they would like to change or substitute for more adaptive or attractive alternatives. Individuals pursuing the integration strategy may be more flexible and adept at doing so, perhaps explaining in part their better psychological adjustment. Hence, type of acculturation, rather than a linear conceptualization of acculturation level, may be more informative when it comes to investigating its relationship to traditional cultural values. Given that acculturation type is by definition linked to how much individuals value identification with each

culture, respectively, it makes sense that acculturation type would also have implications regarding the maintenance or relinquishing of traditional cultural values. Traditional values, such as strong family ties, may serve as protective factors to the extent that they buffer individuals from the stressors involved with the migration process (Organista et al, 2005). This may be a reason that "higher" levels of acculturation are not necessarily linked with better psychological adjustment.

At the same time, given that there is great variability among individuals in the same acculturation "type," when investigating the relationship between acculturation and adjustment, part of the answer may lie in the meanings that individuals attach to the strategies they utilize, as well as the ways in which they utilize those strategies.

Acculturation and gender roles.

gender role attitudes.

Among the many negotiations of identity that must take place, gender role attitude and behaviors are significant, given their implications for family structure, engagement with society, and sense of self. Research on the relationship between acculturation and gender roles has shown that women tend to acculturate faster than men in terms of role expectations (Ginorio, 1979, as cited in Espin, 1982). Acculturation has been linked to more liberal gender role attitudes (Chun & Akutsu, 2005; DeBiaggi, 2002; Kranau et al, 1982; Leaper & Valin, 1996), but not necessarily a more egalitarian division of labor (DeBiaggi, 2002).

Leaper and Valin (1996), based on their study of fifty married Mexican American mothers and thirty-three married Mexican American fathers, suggested that Mexican American parents tend to endorse egalitarian gender role attitudes as they acculturate. They measured gender role attitudes via the Attitudes Toward Gender Scale (AGS), a modification of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1978, as cited in Leaper & Valin, 1996) and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (Galambos, Peterson, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985, as cited in Leaper & Valin, 1996).

They also used indirect and proxy measures of acculturation: native country, language spoken at home, education level, and socioeconomic status, as well as attitudes toward individualistic and communal values.

Kranau, Green, and Valencia-Weber (1982), in a study of 60 Latina women, found that higher levels of acculturation were associated with more liberal attitudes toward women, single marital status, higher levels of education, and younger age. In this study, regression analyses showed that attitudes toward women accounted for 8% of the variance in levels of acculturation, indicating a moderate relationship between acculturation and gender role attitudes. Kranau and colleagues (1982) found that greater acculturation for Hispanic women was correlated with fewer feminine-type household behaviors; however, DeBiaggi (2002) found that acculturation of husbands was not related to sharing household tasks. Both studies used linear bipolar measures of acculturation and measured gender role attitudes with the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972, as cited in Kranau et al, 1982). Differences in acculturation levels of spouses may have implications for the psychological health of partners as well as family dysfunction and acculturative stress (Hervis et al, 2009). Espin (1987) argues that Latin women face greater contradictions between native and host culture when it comes to gender role expectations, meaning that negotiation of gender roles for females may be complex and difficult.

gender roles in relationships.

Chun and Akutsu (2005), in a review of the acculturation literature on several ethnic groups, found that many studies indicated Latin women experience a shift to more egalitarian roles in their relationships. These shifts include more liberal attitudes toward women, less feminine role-type behavior, less stereotyped gender role attitudes, and more assertive behavior (Kranau, Green, & Valencia-Weber, 1982; Soto, 1983; Soto & Shaver, 1982; as cited in Chun & Akutsu, 2005). At the same time, Chun and Akutsu note that men may not change in their participation with childcare or with their gender role attitudes to a corresponding degree.

Stycos (1955, as cited by Vazquez-Nuttall, Romero-Garcia & DeLeon, 1987), in a study of decision-making patterns in families, found that variables relating to the wife are more important in determining how traditional or egalitarian these patterns are, whereas there are not many differences in husband characteristics among different points of the traditional-egalitarian spectrum. Some research has shown that a woman's employment outside of the home, in and of itself, is linked to more egalitarian marital relations regarding decision-making (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Min, 2001). A wife's role as earner may promote some gender role-reversals, which in turn may be linked with marital tension if the husband has more traditional views (Min, 2001). In households where women continue as non-wage earners, traditional roles may actually be reinforced (DeBiaggi, 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). However, Vazquez-Nuttal and colleagues (1987) caution against assuming that higher levels of education or employment outside of the home will have a uniform effect in the modification of gendered dynamics of power and structure within families. In their review of studies on gender roles and perceptions of femininity for Hispanic women, they found that sex-role conceptions and marital decision-making seem influenced by three primary factors, of which increased participation in the labor force was one. The other two were increased education for women and the acculturation process.

Greater decision-making power for women within the family is not necessarily tied to more equitable sharing of household tasks (DeBiaggi, 2002, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Employed wives often experience role strain as a result (Pleck, 1985, as cited in DeBiaggi, 2002). DeBiaggi (2002), in a study of fifty Brazilian couples who had lived an average of seven years in the United States, found that the acculturation levels of husbands were linked to greater sharing of childcare between partners, but not to increased husband participation in feminine sex-type tasks. DeBiaggi also found that wives' marital satisfaction increased as a function of their husbands' acculturation level and gender role attitudes. This data is consistent with other research, which has indicated that women tend to acculturate faster when it comes to gender role attitudes (Ginorio,

1979, as cited in Espin, 1982) and that discrepancies in acculturation levels can be a source of marital strain for immigrant families (Min, 2001).

Because most of these studies have been conducted by measuring acculturation linearly or with proxy measures, there is still much room for exploration.

marianismo.

Most psychological studies on acculturation and gender roles have focused on gender roles as indicated by household division of labor, marital decision-making, or attitudes about the rights and responsibilities of women as compared with men. Only recently has adherence to *marianismo*, a Latin American script for female gender role expectations, been studied in relation to acculturation. While traditional gender roles in general emphasize a hierarchical relationship between the sexes based on patriarchal values, *marianismo* is a culturally relevant construct which focuses on particular aspects of the female gender role that exist in relation to *machismo*, including: self-sacrifice, responsibility, submissiveness, chastity, and commitment to family.

The edicts of *marianismo* are familiar to Latin women of all ages as the guide for how to be a proper woman, and echoes of that legacy may persist even while individuals and families acculturate, although increasing acculturation may lead to less conflict when not subscribing to these ideals (Arredondo, 2002). *The Maria Paradox*, authored by Gil and Vazquez (1997), addresses the conflicts that Latin American women experience in the United States as they strive to balance their native cultural values with the exposure to more liberal gender norms. Gil and Vazquez aim to teach Latina women to embrace the positive aspects of *marianismo*, such as commitment to family, without allowing themselves to be constrained by a sometimes oppressive standard. This process of negotiation may look very different and be undertaken to a different degree depending on what acculturation strategy is utilized by the individual. Gil and Vazquez encourage their readers to employ a bicultural strategy whereby they can fuse "old world traditions" with "new world self-esteem" and become a "new world Latina." That is, they propose that the healthiest way to negotiate the conflicts between the expectations of both cultures is

to embrace the protective and attractive aspects of the native culture, while openly accepting and identifying with those aspects of the host culture which offer choices and freedom. This advice is not in conflict with the research cited in previous sections indicating the relative success of the integration strategy as compared with other acculturation strategies when it comes to psychological well-being (Berry, 1997). However, given the variability of the "bicultural" experience, this negotiation may involve any number of different strategies and combinations.

According to Marano (2000), before she undertook the task of constructing a Latina Values Scale (LVS), *marianismo* had never been explored in a systematic manner, nor had an instrument been designed to measure it. Since then, several others have focused their attention on *marianismo* as it relates to the female immigrant experience, with inconclusive results as to the relationship between *marianismo* and acculturation. Two studies using a linear bipolar measure of acculturation found no differences in *marianismo* across acculturation levels (Melendez, 2004; Orlandini, 2000). Melendez measured *marianismo* with the Latina Values Scale-Revised (LVS-R), while Orlandini asked participants to read operationalized definitions of *marianismo* and Americanized gender roles and rate their agreement on a Likert-type scale. Murguia (2001), however, utilized a bidimensional model of acculturation and found a significant relationship between acculturation and adherence to *marianismo*. Murguia measured *marianismo* with several subscales of existing measures on masculine and feminine traits, *machismo*, and socio-cultural assumptions.

Baldwin and DeSouza (2001), in their analysis "Modelo de *Maria* and *Machismo*: The Social Construction of Gender in Brazil," introduce *marianismo* as a powerful cultural script, but nevertheless one which may not be relevant for all Brazilian women. They point out that "when the White women came to the land [or Brazil], they embodied this vision; but women of the conquest (i.e. women of color) were framed as objects of the desires of the conquerors" (p.12). This pattern is reminiscent of gender roles in the United States, where white upperclass women embodied patriarchal ideals of feminine

frailty and grace, while women of color and low SES were excluded from these scripts. "The image of Mary," state Baldwin and De Souza, "with its limited application, seems to be an archetype for some—but not all—Brazilian women" (p.12).

The construct of *marianismo* may thus be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it introduces a culturally relevant gender role script for Latin American immigrants. On the other hand, it is not necessarily generalizable to all women in these groups and thus not appropriate as the sole frame of reference for researchers interested in gender role identities of Brazilian women specifically or Latin American women generally. An investigation of Brazilian immigrant experiences, then, would not be complete were it to simply assume that women in this population struggle with retaining or letting go of *marianismo*, irrespective of racial identity or SES. It is quite possible that equally strong cultural scripts for the female gender role exist for different groups of Brazilian women.

marianismo and conflict.

Gender role ideology shifts during the immigration process have important implications for family functioning. Differences in acculturation level among family members have been shown to be a contributor to acculturative stress, as they are related to a lack of attunement between family members, family dysfunction, and marital strife (Hervis, Shea & Kaminski, 2009). There is also some research suggesting the women tend to acculturate faster than men when it comes to role expectations (Ginorio, 1979, as cited in Espin, 1982), which may have implications for the ways in which women's changing gender role views and attitudes may be associated with more freedom and confidence, but also with conflict or problems in their lives. Marano (2000) and Melendez (2004) call attention to the fact that renegotiating cultural values may involve conflict. The LVS and LVS-R take into account the cultural conflict that may be tied to Latin women's attitudes regarding *marianismo* during the acculturation process. The measure was designed to be non-pathologizing and allow respondents to indicate the extent to which values on any given point in the spectrum were distressful or adaptive.

The negotiation of conflicting cultural gender expectations is related to the issues of cultural maintenance and cultural acquisition highlighted by Berry (1989). However, to date, there has not been an investigation in the psychological literature exploring the possible relationship between acculturation strategies utilized by Latinas and the cultural conflict they experience as they renegotiate their gender role attitudes. Given that acculturation is an individualized and multilayered process, such an investigation would benefit from a qualitative approach which allows participants to share the ways in which they make sense of the immigration experience and navigate the acculturation process on all levels of their identities.

Issues of Self-Definition

In contrast to the terms *Hispanic* and *Latina/o*, which are often imposed on Brazilians once they immigrate to the United States, *Brazuca* is a term that Brazilian immigrants have coined to define themselves (Tosta, 2004). One theme that has been identified in the *Brazuca* experience is the need to "carefully navigate their position and cultural identity among other Latin Americans" (Davis, 1997). Beserra (2004) analyzes the tension of the relationship between Brazilian immigrants and these labels. She points out that many Brazilians reject the term *Hispanic* with the reasoning that it only refers to Spanish-speakers, and that they are more likely to accept the term *Latina/o* because of its reference to a geographic region. However, she adds that "while that is certainly true, it does not considerably change the fact that for the US race ideology both labels are connected to the same social position and it is precisely to that reality that Brazilians, as well as other Latin American immigrants, react" (p.55-56). She thus highlights the issues of power that play out in the naming of groups and in the ability, or lack thereof, for an individual to define oneself.

Marcus (2009) criticizes the use of pan-ethnic labels, calling the terms *Hispanic* and *Latina/o* "confusing" and "problematic" because they refer to a heterogenous group as though it were a single cultural monolithic entity, and because the very definition of

these terms is ambiguous, inconsistent, and inaccurate. Forbes (1992) makes a tongue-in-cheek recommendation that we use similar pan-ethnic labels for other groups:

> If, indeed, the Hispanic concept is useful, then we should also adopt a 'Gallic' category that would include French Canadians, Cajuns, Louisiana Creoles, Haitians, French West Indians, and French-speaking West Africans, a 'Lusitanic' category including Brazilians, Caboverdians, Azoreans, Portuguese, Angolans, etc., and, of course, a Britanic or 'Anglic' group. If it is scientifically useful to lump people of different races and nationalities together under the category of a former imperial colonizer, then why limit this analytical breakthrough to the Spanish-speaking world? (p. 76)

Forbes then proceeds to argue the absurdity of such logic, and rallies, "It is time for Amérigo-Latinos to throw off the Hispanic yoke: *¡Viva la independencia!*" (p.77) The labels are seen as oppressive, imposed by colonizing forces, and generally unhelpful as well as biologically and geographically inaccurate.

For the Brazilian immigrant there is often a question of how to position oneself within an already existent racial and ethnic system which does not neatly fit them, and to what extent that agency is even possible. Beserra explores the ways in which racialization of the Brazilian immigrant may mark them as occupying a disadvantaged social position. One of her participants describes the struggle of being racialized, saying that "Latinos are like a lower class for the Americans." Beserra also states that issues of identity negotiation such as in which situations Brazilians "resort to their Latinidad" (p.56) and to what extent acculturation (across individuals as well as generations) relates to changes in individual self-identification (as black, white, Latina/o, etc) are to date largely understudied. There is thus much to be understood about the ways in which identity is consistently negotiated and renegotiated.

Torres et al (2003) discuss the importance of recognizing multiple identities as an inherent part of the human experience. The authors liken the experience of these identities to the experience of listening to music. They relate a common metaphor of a

radio dial, with different stations (identities) becoming loud or salient at different times, but with all of them in operation even when not being attended to; however, the authors also suggest that a more accurate description may be that of a symphony, which is multidimensional and "where all identities (instruments) are playing at the same type to create a melody that varies in volume, intensity and emphasis on various solos being played" (p.68). In this conceptualization of identity, each identity is always intersecting with another, and none stand alone in a vacuum. Synthesizing the conclusions of various researchers, Torres et al propose the following conclusions about identity to stem from this conceptualization: it is "constructed", it is "grounded in social and cultural contexts", it "[represents] the negotiation between inside and outside worlds", it is "continuously fluid and dynamic (not a destination)", it is "permeated and shaped by issues of privilege and power", it is "often multiple rather than singular", and it "often [represents] an 'awakening' process in which difference is experienced and identity is given psychological weight" (p. 69).

In short, identity development is a complex and multilayered process that cannot accurately be reduced to simple variables or generalized across populations. Such a process lends itself readily to a qualitative lens, and particularly a phenomenological lens which is interested in issues of identity and focuses on the lived experience of participants as they make sense of their lives. A qualitative lens resists the reductionistic impulse and rather embraces complexity. Jones (1997, in Torres p.71), in a qualitative study of identity development in female college students using grounded theory, found that gender interacted with other identities such as race and culture quite frequently.

Concluding Remarks

Despite the lack of an established literature on Brazilian Americans in psychological research to date, there exists an expansive literature to draw from examining issues of acculturation, adjustment, gender role ideology, and issues of immigrant identity negotiation. Because Brazil shares many cultural values with other

Latin American groups, they may encounter similar struggles as they adjust to the United States and try to find their place. However, because Brazilians are a distinct group which has often not been perceived as such, Brazilian immigrants have the difficult task of consistently moving in and out of cultural spaces occupied by Latin American groups with more established histories in the United States. Indeed, according to Tosta 2004), "Brazilians have positioned themselves 'in and out' of the Latin American community. This movement composed of simultaneous 'entrances' and 'exits'... becomes problematic in the broader context of the varied minorities in the United States" (p. 578). The dynamic process of self-identification challenges Brazilian immigrants to individually negotiate their positionality on a daily basis.

While there has been some quantitative work on the Brazilian immigrant experience, the lack of established paradigms that have been validated with this population is problematic and presents a dilemma for researchers. To the extent that they do apply to Brazilian experiences, they may not encompass them. Some of the most informative work to date on Brazilian immigrants in particular has emerged from a qualitative lens, mostly from disciplines outside of psychology. Anthropologist Maxine Margolis (1994) named the problem of Brazilian invisibility in the cultural discourse of the United States, utilizing an ethnographic lens to get at the experiences of her participants. Geographer Alan Marcus (2009) utilized ethnographic techniques including participant observation, survey data, and structured and unstructured interviews to evaluate the ways in which Brazilian immigrants "...(re)create places and spaces within the migration process" (p. 179). Anthropologist Bernadete Beserra (2006, 2008) utilized an ethnographic approach to examine ways in which the immigration experience is linked with issues of social class for Brazilians in the United States. Professor of Brazilian literature and culture Luciano Tosta (2004) utilized a literary analysis perspective to examine *Brazuca* identity in a piece entitled "Latino, *eu?* The Paradoxical Interplay of Identity in *Brazuca* literature." While Tosta investigates literature rather than participant

narratives, he points out that the genre of *Brazuca* literature is often autobiographical and usually is informed by factual events and real personal experiences.

Although traditional empiricist work to date has investigated issues of acculturation and its relationship to adjustment, identity negotiation, and gender role ideology, there is a dearth of literature on Brazilian immigrants in general, as well as a significant gap in our understanding of their lived experiences as they understand it. Given the central importance of individualized processes of meaning-making and identity negotiation to the immigration experience, it is no surprise that some of the richest data on these issues has come from qualitative, ethnographic studies. The current study will utilize a qualitative phenomenological approach with an eye toward the ways in which Brazilian immigrant women make sense of their lived experiences. While it will be informed by prior research, there will be a focus on participants defining the terrain rather than on imposing existing frameworks onto their experiences. For a population whose identity is constantly in question—due to their mis-categorization by the host culture, general ignorance about their characteristics by the host culture, a lack of attention to this group by researchers until relatively recently, and the ambivalent ties of this group to other Latin American groups—this focus on self-definition and attention to individual participants' meaning-making processes may be especially important.

Chapter 3. Method

> "Phenomenology is a low-hovering, in-dwelling, meditative philosophy that glories in the concreteness of person-world relations and accords lived experience, with all its indeterminancy and ambiguity, primacy over the known" (Wertz, 2005, p.175).

Proposed Study and Research Question

The current study seeks to build on previous research on the ways in which immigration intersects with identity negotiation. While previous research with immigrant groups has examined issues of acculturation, acculturative stress, and gender role transition, there has been little attention to Brazilian immigrants, and even for extensively studied populations such as Mexican Americans, researchers have been inconsistent in their measurement and operationalization of these constructs in quantitative studies. One unique advantage to a qualitative approach is that it can allow us to treat participants as "experts" in relation to the phenomenon in question. In this case, through interviews, immigrant women can be engaged in an exploration of their experiences rather than imposing predetermined theory and categories onto those experiences. This reduces the risk of reductionistic frameworks that obscure the opportunity to examine these questions from a fresh perspective. A qualitative approach may thus allow for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon in question.

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of Brazilian immigrant women in the United States, drawing from an Interpretive Phenomenological stance in order to study and explicate the following research question: How do Brazilian women who have immigrated to the United States negotiate and make sense of their identity?

Epistemological Framework and Rationale

Introduction.

The current study of Brazilian women's immigrant experience and its intersection with identity negotiation was conducted with a phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis. The phenomenological approach is characterized by "descriptive psychological reflection" (Wertz, 2005; Finlay, 2009), as well as rich description and an "open phenomenological attitude" (Finlay, 2009, p.8). The phenomenological approach stands apart from traditional scientific views of research which rely on positivist-empiricist assumptions about knowledge. It privileges lived experiences and is concerned with the discovery of meaning rather than cause and effect. There is also an awareness of the researcher as a subjective actor in the research that he or she conducts.

Phenomenology is not a unified field, and indeed, ongoing debates exist about what constitutes proper phenomenological inquiry and analysis. Giorgi (2006) admits that "a proper understanding of how to employ the phenomenological method in the social sciences is not something about which a consensus exists" (p. 353) which is not to minimize its importance or relevance in the social sciences. If anything, the richness and nuance offered by phenomenology is invaluable. However, this richness and depth must be obtained through the use of a cohesive, philosophically grounded and consistent, and well-articulated method. Given the variety of phenomenological methodologies available, proper attention should be given to the reasons for choosing and/or modifying a particular method.

Challenging empiricism.

Phenomenology has much in common with other qualitative approaches, including its emphasis on extensive description and researcher positionality. Qualitative methods also allow for "research participants' accounts of their own experiences on their own terms" as well as the adoption of "a thoroughly critical analytic stance" for

researchers (Lyons & Coyle, 2007, p. 17). The positivist-empiricist stance may thus give way to a self-consciously interpretive stance. Another key advantage to qualitative approaches, according to Lyons and Coyle (2007), is that they allow for the possibility of "[attending] to the key factor of context in all its complexity and fluidity" (p. 17).

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in his seminal work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), lays out the defining characteristics of appropriate cultural analysis. He highlights the interpretive nature of cultural observation: "what we call data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (p. 9). He also proceeds to deconstruct both culture and the analysis thereof, without stripping away the importance of qualitative work. In fact, he elevates it, advocating for "thick description" (p. 6) and an awareness of the limits of objectivity. Geertz challenges and deconstructs the positivist notion that drives empirical science, questioning the ideas of operationalization and quantification as necessary objectives in quality research. For example, he uses the metaphor of a wink, which can be quantified as the swift closing and opening of one eye, pointing out the various meanings that that one action can take on. "The thing to ask about...is not what [the] ontological status is" of the phenomenon in question, but "[the] thing to ask is what their import is" (p. 10). He thus points to the importance of meaning, and the ways in which meanings are constructed by participants as well as researchers. In so doing, Geertz shifts the paradigm of knowledge from being considered as objective, reducible, replicable operationalizations to "an enlargement of the universe of human discourse" (p. 14) which is at least as valuable, albeit less straightforward and far messier. According to Geertz,

> The claim to attention of an ethnographic account does not rest on its author's ability to capture primitive facts in faraway places and carry them home like a mask or a carving, but on the degree to which he is able to clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement—what manner of men are these?—to which unfamiliar acts emerging out of unknown backgrounds naturally give rise. (p. 16)

The focus, then, is on an open and ongoing dialogue between researcher and participant, as well as a self-conscious examination of positionality on the part of the

researcher. The issues of validity and verification for this kind of research are necessarily distinct from traditional ideas of error, variance, and reliability. According to Geertz, "the determining question... is whether it sorts winks from twitches and real winks from mimicked ones" (p. 16). That is, the analysis is 'valid' when it can examine and impart meaning, thus expanding discourse.

The investigation of multiple case studies.

In 1988, Rosenwald presented what he called "a theory of multiple-case research" as an approach to discovering meaning from a social science perspective. In this piece, he called for a recognition of the academic relevance of case studies, as well as an approach to qualitative inquiry that engages case studies in dialogue with each other. In this piece, he challenges the idea that the uniqueness of an individual's perspective renders that perspective scientifically untenable by appealing to the ways in which unique vantage points can inform the phenomenon in question, illuminating it from different angles. In this way, a "multiple-case study is not merely a collation of single-case studies" and "the construction [of the phenomenon] is qualitatively richer than the mere average of the two images" provided by participants (p. 247). That is, the researcher attempts to obtain "a useful synthesis" (p. 247) derived from "observers at a range of vantage points rather than crowded on one side only" (p. 247). The very nature of individual subjectivity, which makes one person's experience inherently distinct from another's, is not considered error from this perspective. Rather, it is considered fabric to be worked into a synthesis, where overlaps and disconnects are deconstructed and interpreted in an attempt to gain a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon in question. According to Rosenwald "[the] multiple-case approach to social knowledge is not meant to replace hypothesis testing; it has different goals" (p. 249). Participants are not chosen to the extent that they are alike and thus their experience replicable or without 'error,' but rather to the extent that they provide "good examples" or "represent the typical with atypical clarity" so that they can illuminate that phenomenon from different

perspectives (Rosenwald, 1988, p. 260). Diversity is in this sense of tremendous scientific value and does not diminish but rather enriches the analysis.

Part of the diversity offered by multiple-case studies lies in the culture- and perspective-bound nature of perception and knowledge. Steedman (1991) agrees with Geertz and Rosenwald on the importance of culture in framing the meaning of phenomena. He asserts: "Knowing requires a knower" (p. 53) and challenges the empiricist notion that meaning and knowledge may be divorced from individual subjectivity. Indeed, each "person can be regarded as history framed, as it were, by all manner of personal circumstances such as religion, gender and class" and "individual persons are persons at all in virtue of their membership within human communities, or cultures" (p. 55). According to Steedman, our very humanity and all of the perception and knowledge that comes with it, is culturally embedded. Rosenwald adds, "the knowledge attained in an investigation of this sort [that is, the multiple-case study] is time-bound and local" (p. 256).

The claim of knowledge bound by subjectivity does not diminish phenomenological inquiry. If anything, it brings into question the assumptions of positivist empirical approaches that there is such a thing as "objective" knowledge at all, and suggests that "an all-purpose objective truth is a chimera" (Rosenwald, 1988, p. 260). According to Steedman (1991), "The great project of epistemological certainty, from Descartes on, is now an historical entity (Rorty, 1979, 1982); *no* knowledge can enjoy such a status" (p. 58). So-called empiricist "objective" approaches, then, are also shaped and fashioned, rather than discovered in some absolute sense. Knowledge necessitates a knower, which always is linked with a perspective that is to some extent time and culture-bound, even if systemically rather than individually. Steedman does not view this assertion as leading to a relativism that minimizes the research endeavor, but rather, he views it as an awareness of the limits of human knowledge that can expand its own boundaries:

> It is worth noting here that, despite the intoxicating attraction of scientific positivism as the best or finest sort of knowledge, most of what we know is not, and never was, of this sort. Most of what we know, most of the knowing we do, is concerned with what it is to be human and to be situated as we are. The constant 'topics' of human life are, for example, love and loneliness, pride and pain, and preeminently, birth and death. We can know these things in two significantly different ways. We can 'know about' them in the sense that we can comprehend the facts of the case, or theories about the facts of the case.... We can also know them in a quite different way which is more difficult to characterize. We can know them as human persons. In this sense such knowledge must begin with at least some facts of the case but cannot end there. (p. 58).

While there is a certain allure to the idea of knowledge unhindered by a knower, undisturbed by historical or societal context, and unmarred by human "error," there is no honest examination of the human condition without entering into that which makes us human, what empiricism largely sees as "error" thus becoming the very essence of the investigation in phenomenology. Nor is this examination any less legitimate, rich, or important. It is, on the contrary, an approach which allows for nuances of humanity and social reality to be considered when studying the social and the human.

One primary task of the phenomenological researcher is to be cognizant of the paradox that research presents: to examine a phenomenon necessarily reduces it and expands it at the same time. Rendering an experience in language necessarily limits it because, a participant does not communicate, either consciously or unwittingly, everything that he or she knows or feels about that experience. By perceiving an experience, however, either as participant or researcher, we necessarily add our own subjectivity and thus expand and give meaning to a phenomenon. "An alternative position" to the positivist empiricist stance is for the researcher "to recognize that reflexivity cannot be avoided, is an inevitable consequence of engaging in research with people, and that it can be harnessed as a valuable part of the research exercise itself" (Smith, 1994, p. 254). This perspective IPA owes to its hermeneutic influences. Indeed, according to Steedman, "recognition of the fact that there is neither a single truth to be

found in acts of interpretation, nor a single method by which to proceed in such work, has been the central contribution of contemporary hermeneutics" (p. 57).

Issues of social relevance and power.

Part of the social relevance of a scientific endeavor rests on the extent to which it can address real world issues. The multiple-case study approach, which is largely embodied in the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach, does just that. Not only does it come at the phenomenon in question from the inside out rather than from an a priori established imposed construction of truth, but it maintains an openness to the possibility of new meanings, "reversals of meaning" (Rosenwald, 1988, p. 261), and thus, the reverberation of new voices. Rosenwald, in pointing out the culture-bound nature of human perception and knowledge, also brings a psychodynamic sensibility to his argument by positing that the reflexive process can be transformative. His aim in moving away from the empiricist position is not only to shift his focus but also to open the possibility for social change: "The aim is to stimulate the design of methods that enrich social knowledge and create a new basis for addressing social problems not only theoretically and not only for academics, but practically for those afflicted" (p. 243).

Such claims to social justice and societal transformation may seem lofty, but in a very real way the open engagement with the participant and privileging of his or her lived experience, as opposed to a privileging of previously determined categories and factors that participants fit into, allows for a shift in power and an expanded perspective for the scholarly community, as well as for those engaged in this dialogal process—both participants and researchers. Rosenwald's acknowledgement of the synthesis in multiple-case studies being greater than the sum of its parts brings to bear on this point: there is a way in which the researcher, through the process of interviews and qualitative analysis, might come upon knowledge that transcends the awareness of the participants themselves, and a way in which the research can change the participants by expanding and complicating their awareness of themselves and their lived experience.

Given that the current study will be conducted with participants in a population which is largely disenfranchised, because they are women, because they are immigrants, and possibly for some, because they are undocumented, issues of power and its connections to meaning and meaning-making appear to be central.

Issues of translation.

Rosenwald (1988) is acutely aware of issues of languaging. There is a choosing and a reducing, as well as an expansion of meaning, that occurs when phenomena are put into language. There are also social and cultural boundaries to the ways in which we utilize language. Rosenwald highlights the potential importance of silence: what is said, what is not said, what could be said and what is not known to be possible to say. Here his analysis recognizes the interpretive nature of perceiving which is so central to the phenomenological lens, and which is present for both participant and researcher at every stage of the research endeavor.

In a study involving data collection in Portuguese and the culmination of a manuscript in English, issues of languaging are even more layered. Nikander (2008) describes the transcription and translation processes as "a process of 'double rendering'" (p. 229) in which the researcher makes choices which have practical and ideological implications. He suggests that researchers cultivate a self-conscious awareness of the choices they make, as well as a philosophical and methodological transparency with the reader, inasmuch as they can given publication constraints. He is clear that data analysis should be done on the original language transcript, and asserts that the aim is not perfections, but "acknowledging, embracing and discussing the dilemmas of translation and transcription" as a way of achieving "good enough transcripts" (p. 229). In this brief reference to Winnicott's (1953) concept of the "good enough mother," Nikander is aware of the ways in which small, philosophically grounded steps may lead to responsible, important, and enriching areas of research, even while the ideal remains obscure. Indeed, the ideal is just that; since every process of translation is a rendering by definition, and

not simply a copying over or exact replica, the most that we can do as researchers is to be as explicit and cautious as possible about the ways in which we make our interpretive choices. The current study, in its phenomenological focus, intends to stay true to these aims.

The phenomenological endeavor.

The current study is informed by the phenomenological philosophy as a whole, but will specifically utilize an interpretive phenomenological lens, an approach developed by Jonathan Smith, which has become quite popular in the UK. Smith situates IPA within the field of phenomenological analysis as "part of a stable of closely connected approaches which share a commitment to the exploration of personal lived experience, but which have different emphases or suggested techniques to engage in this project" (Smith, 2004, p. 41). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, or IPA, is philosophically informed mainly by three fields: phenomenology, which has "a particular interest in thinking about what the experience of being human is *like*... especially in terms of the things which matter to us, and which constitute our lived world" (Smith et al, 2009, p. 11); hermeunetics, "the theory of interpretation" (Smith et al, 2009, p. 21); and idiography, which is "concerned with the particular" (Smith et al, 2009, p. 29).

Edmund Husserl, considered the founder of phenomenology, was interested in the essential characteristics of phenomena. He advocated for the suspension of the researcher's perspective through the "epoché process" whereby the researcher identifies and acknowledges her prior beliefs and biases, but sets them aside and examines the data from an open and fresh attitude without incorporating prior knowledge or a priori interpretive schema onto the data. That, is, the researcher "brackets" past knowledge and biases (Giorgi, 2006; Wertz, 2005), and only after extensive interaction with the data uses past knowledge and theory to inform the study. This intentional naiveté is an attempt to expand the researcher's ability to enter into the lifeworlds of her participants. Husserl also advocated for the "eidetic reduction" which is an attempt to get at the essence of the

phenomenon in question. This essence is what allows the data to be of scientific interest, where the researcher can "distinguish sufficiently what [belongs] to the phenomenon and what [belongs] to the individual" (Giorgi, 2006, p. 357). The Husserlian approach, which has been further characterized and specified by Giorgi who founded the Duquesne phenomenological approach, allows for the researcher to make interpretations about the essence of a phenomenon which transcends individual participants' experience.

IPA's phenomenological lens "orients to an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to attempting to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself" (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 36). It shares with the Husserlian approaches an interest in the lifeworld of participants. However, it assumes that "analysis always involves interpretations" (Smith et al, 2009, p. 35). This approach assumes the double hermeneutic of the participant making sense of their own life while the researcher makes sense of the participant's sense-making process. The researcher is thus seen in an active role. Unlike Husserlian phenomenology which has a descriptive focus, IPA assumes that all perception involves an interpretive process, and engages bracketing of the researcher's experience "as both a cyclical process and something which can only be partially achieved" (Smith et al, 2009, p. 25).

IPA is a heavily idiographic approach in its focus on a particular case. However, Smith (2004) believes that "delving deeper into the particular also takes us closer to the universal" (p. 42), citing Warnock (1987). IPA thus tends to have a smaller sample size than other approaches, but still aims at illuminating some aspect of the "essence" of the phenomenon in question. The idea of the "hermeneutic circle" in which there is a "dynamic relationship between the part and the whole at a series of levels" allows for an iterative analytic process whereby the researcher moves back and forth between different levels of analysis as well as back and forth in relationship to the data (Smith, 2009, p. 28).

The phenomenological approach is particularly suited to study the immigration experience of women, as this experience inherently involves meaning-making, "selving"

(Langdridge, 30), and issues of identity and transition. IPA in particular lends itself readily to an investigation of issues of identity and transition given its idiographic emphasis. According to Smith (2004) "IPA studies usually deal with significant existential issues of considerable moment to the participants and the researchers" (p. 48-49). IPA is also an approach that inherently deals with issues of languaging, and language is a crucial piece to consider in a project which will be carried out largely in Portuguese, only to be translated into English. Attention will be given to the ways in which language shapes and gives meaning to experience, and the ways in which this meaning is necessarily shifted and imperfectly translated as the researcher attempts to describe findings in English for an American audience. IPA is a promising method and "a useful tool for cultural psychology" given "its focus upon contextualized and detailed accounts of experience" (Reid et al, 2005).

In 1988, at the time of Rosenwald's essay, he described the endeavor of multiple-case study as "a body of undocumented lore among those who have worked on these ventures" and thus lamented that "[the] reader who expects technical assistance in conducting a multiple-case investigation will... be disappointed" (p. 241). In some ways, it is bound to be the case that a manualized, technically dictated approach is often not found in the qualitative world. However, since the inception of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analytic approach, the particular question of how to engage case studies in conversations with each other, and the ways in which a researcher can capture and interpret the richness of such data, has certainly been addressed to a great extent. IPA researchers also stand alongside Rosenwald in their philosophy and commitment to cases as significant and worthy of study. The first introduction of IPA into the psychological literature in 1996 advocated for attention to the individual without sacrificing social relevance, indeed assuming the individual to have social relevance (Smith, 1996). Smith et al (2009) synthesize the philosophy of IPA as follows:

> IPA is concerned with human lived experience, and posits that experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it. These meanings, in turn, may illuminate the embodied, cognitive-affective and existential domains of psychology. People are physical and psychological entities. They do things in the world, they reflect on what they do, and those actions have meaningful, existential consequences. (p. 34)

The current study attempts to integrate IPA's concern with the particular and attention to idiographic analysis with Rosenwald's appeal for diversity of perspectives as a way to expand social knowledge. This is a particular group situated in a particular socio-historical context, and I hope in the course of the project to gain a richer understanding of the phenomenon of the lived experience of being a female Brazilian immigrant which may transcend individual participant experiences. At the same time, in working from an IPA lens, I oscillate my focus among the levels of analysis available to me, and give considerable attention to the particulars of each case study. In this sense, I expect to find richness in diversity, and to discover ways in which the immigration experience, even within this 'homogenous' sample, can be diverse and uniquely vary among individuals. How might the immigration experience of these women be complicated or intersected by individual participants' backgrounds and multiple identities? How might the particulars of individual experience shed light on the phenomenon and transcend the individual in relevance? This dynamic undulating focus will allow me to uncover what Rosenwald calls "reversals of meaning" (p. 261), where the majority discourse may be deconstructed or seen from a different perspective. Rosenwald gives the example of a phenomenon which though seen "with pride or good humor by a group is (at times) faced in shame by individuals" (p. 262). He argues that it is a focus on multiple case studies which allows for these discoveries and explorations of meanings which may otherwise lie obscured. In opening ourselves up to individual narratives at a deep level, we are able to engage with the philosophical tension of multiple interpretations existing regarding the same phenomenon, rather than a priori

fitting the phenomenon into a set and pre-determined framework. In this way we may open the possibility of becoming aware of the water we swim in. Rosenwald posits that this awareness can be both personally and socially transformative.

Smith (2004) asserts that IPA "operates at a level which is clearly grounded in the text [or transcript] but which also moves beyond the text to a more interpretive and psychological level" and "recognizes that different levels of interpretation are possible" (p. 44). These different levels of interpretation allow for the expansion of social knowledge promoted by Rosenwald, the expansion of human discourse discussed by Geertz, and the complexity of human experience being synthesized into a meaningful analysis as guided by Smith.

Procedure

The procedure of the current study is guided by IPA principles, more than by a particular pre-determined prescribed set of guidelines. The spirit of IPA is that of "flexible guidelines which can be adapted by individual researchers in light of their research aims" (Smith & Etough, 2007); thus, there is no manualization of methods. However, there are certain commonly used norms which reflect ideological principles of the model. This study attempts to honor those norms when relevant, as well as to stay true to IPA's ideology.

Participants.

Thirteen first-generation Brazilian immigrant women in Austin as well as the Greater Boston Area were recruited for the present study, and of those thirteen, ten were chosen for in-depth analysis given the extent to which they provided richness of data. Recruitment was limited to participants over 18 years of age who were in significant relationships at the time of immigration. Of the three interviews that were discarded from analysis, the first was that of a woman who shortly before immigration married an Iranian male. Her narrative included a discussion of the ways in which he and his family

attempted to impose gender and relationship norms that came from their home culture. Given that this aspect of her narrative was central but introduced a third cultural component into the data, her interview did not seem to fit with the current study's focus on the identity negotiation of women balancing their experiences with Brazilian and American cultures. The second interview that was discarded was that of a young woman who had immigrated to the United States with her father as a teenager, as opposed to coming into the country as an adult with goals of her own. The third did not lend itself to rich interpretation and in-depth analysis due to its thin descriptions (Geertz, 1973).

The inclusion of participants from both Texas and Massachusetts helps to contribute to existing literature on Brazilian immigrants in Massachusetts as well as address a gap in our understanding of this population in other parts of the nation. However, this was also a convenience sample given the primary researcher's connections with Texas and Massachusetts. The primary researcher is a graduate student in Texas and grew up in the Greater Boston Area.

Participants came from a variety of socioeconomic and professional backgrounds in their home country. Of the ten interviewees included in the analyses, four had less than a High School education, four had completed High School or High School and some additional technical training, and two had completed college. Five women had been in the United States for between ten and fourteen years, three had been in the United States for between five and nine years, one had been in the United States for less than five years and one for over fourteen. In short, the majority of the women had had the opportunity to move past the initial stages of the immigration experience and experience the process of identity negotiation over time. Women also experienced a rance of documentation statuses. Five women in the sample were undocumented, and the other fiver were in various stages of documentation, from having a social security number only to being a citizen. For more demographic information, please refer to Table 1.

Phenotypically, all of the women in the sample exhibited mixed racial and ethnic features. Women ranged from relatively light (Adriana discusses being "almost-white")

to relatively dark (notably Bete whose experience will be discussed in the Results section). However, most of the women exhibited mixed features that placed them in the middle of the spectrum. Participants were not asked specifically how they identified themselves racially and ethnically, although they were asked to reflect on their experience with race and ethnicity. Therefore, while the current data does not include what terms all of the current participants might use to self-identity, it does include an investigation of the dynamics by which they negotiate their positionality in their world, including their willingness to address race and ethnicity and their struggle with defining themselves on those terms.

Recruitment methods included informal networking, as well as snowball sampling and referrals within Brazilian immigrant communities. Snowball sampling is a recognized method of reaching "hidden" populations (Margolis, 1994; Messias, 2000) as well as a recognized approach in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 2009).

Approval by Human Subjects Committee.

The proposed study was conducted in compliance with the ethical standards set forth by the American Psychological Association, as well as the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Texas at Austin.

Data collection.

Participants were asked to participate in in-depth, semi-structured interviews that lasted between one hour and three hours. The loquaciousness of individual participants, as well as their willingness to participate in in-depth disclosure, affected the length of the interviews. In-depth, one-on-one interviews have historically been the preferred data collection method in IPA, as they allow for the creation of a relationship between researcher and participant that reflects the phenomenological focus on openness and

dialogue, as well as for the full and deep disclosure needed for 'rich' data (Smith et al, 2009).

The interview schedule was guided by the research question, as it is "a conversation with a purpose" (Smith et al, 2009). However, the researcher utilized an interview schedule with the understanding that the focus is on the lived experience of the participant and the schedule is a guide but not set in stone. According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), "The participant is the experiential expert on the topic in hand and therefore they should be given much leeway in taking the interview to 'the thing itself'" (p. 58). Researcher and participant are "understood to work... in flexible collaboration" (Reid et al, 2005).

A research schedule was constructed in order to provide the researcher with more clarity about the ground to be covered in the interview (see Appendix). It also provided me the opportunity to prepare for potential moments of difficulty. In this way, it was a "loose agenda" which also helped me "anticipate potential sensitive issues" (Smith et al, 2009). It also allowed me to have an idea of the potential order of questions, even as I was aware that they may shift in the moment (Smith & Etough, 2007).

The researcher, then, attempted as much as possible to create the space for participant disclosure, while recognizing that the participant as an agentic being in the research process and without attempting to navigate the interview, so long as the agreed-upon purpose of the interview was not strayed from. The interview is seen "as an interaction" (Smith et al, 2009) and "the intention is to assure the participant of the value of what they have to say about the topic in the context of their lives in order to facilitate the giving of rich experiential accounts" (Smith & Etough, 2007).

Participants were also asked where they would like the interview to be conducted. According to Smith et al (2009), the interview site is preferably one that is "comfortably familiar," "safe (for all parties) and reasonably quiet, and free for interruptions" (p. 63). The current study took place in informal settings which often included participant homes, with one exception in which we met in a hair salon as the participant's preferred location.

Transcription and translation.

Transcription was guided by IPA norms, which require a semantic record or the interview. This record is a transcript of everything that is said by everyone present; however, the prosodic characteristics of the conversation are not recorded in detail as they would be in other methods (like conversation analysis or some discourse analyses) given that the focus in IPA is on the interpretation of the account content. Non-verbals such as laughter and significant pauses were noted (Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Etough, 2007).

Transcription of interviews was done by a research assistant. All analysis was done by the primary researcher, with repeated immersion in both data transcripts and audio recordings of the interviews. Analysis was done on original transcripts (Nikander, 2008). Translation was completed by the researcher, who is a native speaker in both Portuguese and English.

Data analysis.

Data analysis was guided by a close reading of participant accounts. Smith (2004) distinguishes analysis conducted by "reading into" the text, which allows for pre-existing theoretical concepts to be called upon in making sense of the data, from analysis conducted by "close reading" of the text "informed by a general psychological interest but without being influenced by a specific pre-existing formal theoretical position" (p. 45). Smith advocates for an analysis that is grounded in the lived experience of participants, and finds authority by delving deeper rather than imposing from outside. At the same time, he does not shy away from making theoretical connections, so long as they are marked by a more "speculative" tone, done after a "close textual analysis," and "guided by that emergent analysis" (Smith, 2004, p. 45).

The analytical endeavor began with a record of initial thoughts and associations on the part of the researcher both in reading interview transcriptions and reviewing interview recordings. Each interview was reviewed several times, with the researcher

recording anything of interest or potential significance. The repetition of immersion in the data is also meant to result in a deeper immersion in the participant experience. From initial thoughts, I proceeded to make note of and identify emergent themes, first within a case, then across cases. Throughout the analytical process, I progressed from a descriptive to an interpretive stance while developing a dialogue between myself, the data, and my psychological knowledge about the participant experiences in context. Finally, this process of continued immersion in the data, as well as increasingly nuanced reading and a honing in on themes of importance, allowed me to comment on relationships between themes. The process of IPA analysis is iterative (Smith & Etough, 2007; Smith et al, 2009). As the researcher I continuously move between levels of interpretation, from description to interpretation, and from an emic position where I prioritize participant views to an etic position where I make sense of their views with an eye toward context and an attention to the research question (Reid & Flowers, 2004).

The idiographic focus of IPA dictates that substantial attention be given to one case before moving onto analysis of the next case. Thus, the process just described was repeated with each case, focusing first on the individual before attempting to make connections between them.

Chapter 4. Results

Participant	Current Age	Years in U.S.	Documentation Status	Job held in Brazil	Job held in U.S.
Helena	34	13 yr	Undocumented	Dental Hygienist	Housecleaner, Homemaker
Adriana	42	12 yr	Undocumented	Teacher	Housecleaner and Pizzeria worker
Paula	42	22 yr	Citizen	None	Housecleaning business
Cassandra	52	12 yr	SS Not work permit	Bank manager	Nanny
Bete	38	10 yr	In process of citizenship	Nurse	Nurse
Mariana	40	6.5 yr	Undocumented	Restaurant worker	Babysitter and Restaurant worker
Luisa	43	8 yr	Work permit and SS, in process for Green card	Dentist	Housecleaner, Nanny, Certified NursingAssistant
Kelsi	25	1yr 8 mo	Undocumented	Homemaker	Housecleaner and Restaurant worker
Rebeca	39	13 yr	Citizen	Homemaker, Retail	Housecleaner
Maria	42	9 yr	Undocumented	Police Clerk	Home Day Care owner

Table 1. Participant Data

The results of the current study indicate five key themes in the experiences of the participants. These themes reflect the different dimensions of negotiation and personal transformation that the women discussed experiencing in their immigration experiences. Consistently across the interviews, women discussed their immigration experience as one that shifted their relationships with themselves and the world around them and made

lasting changes in their sense of themselves. Emergent themes were: immigration as a quest, divided self, sense of legitimacy and belonging, navigating relationships, and coping strategies.

Immigration as a Quest

Women indicated that their immigration experience was a journey with a purpose. This journey was prompted by the desire for greater opportunity, usually financial, and was seen by many as a temporary stay after which life would be resumed in Brazil. Upon arriving in the United States, women often experienced initial difficulties, and challenges to their plans, which led at times to feelings of disillusionment, and often to a shift in their focus regarding their goals.

Purpose of Immigration

Consistently across interviews, women spoke of their immigration experience as being prompted by a driving goal or desire, always at least in part financial in nature. They came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and professional training; some were homemakers or restaurant workers; several had advanced degrees and exercised a profession. For most of the women, the transition from Brazil to the United States involved a transition in their professional identities; only one of the ten, Bete, continued to exercise the same profession after coming to the United States, which was nursing—and that, because she was recruited through a program for that particular purpose. While the transition in professional identity held different meanings for different women and required some negotiation and at times personal struggle, by and large the immigration experience provided the possibility for a sense of social mobility they had never experienced in their home country, with women perceiving greater financial opportunities abroad than in their home country.

By and large, these women left their lives, knowing full well that they would be performing relatively unskilled labor jobs in a new country. Most spoke little or no

English upon their arrival. And yet, they came. Several women described experiencing financial dead ends in their home country which prompted them to consider coming here as an alternative. Cassandra reported that the experience of being laid off after almost two decades of working at a bank and moving up the ranks, after the banks were privatized, was a pivotal event in her decision to come to the United States, a possibility she had never envisioned:

> We were not ready to compete, to look for new paths in Brazil. So it was then that… I had never thought… Look I was like this, so realistic in my country, that I wanted to fight, to win there, I had never seen, nor heard, nor considered the possibility of leaving my country; and I didn't even know that Brazilians immigrated here. I had a great lack of knowledge about this information, because I was never interested… My friend came up to me one day and said: "Cassandra, why don't you go to the United States? I think you would do well, because you are a very hard worker, you are very… expansive, you fight, you don't have barriers, I think it would work well for you." I said, how does this work… I didn't know anyone who had come here, didn't know what lifestyle it was, what the possibilities were, didn't know anything. Then when this idea came up, then you know, when we start talking about the topic, always someone or another shows up who has a friend, who already lived [there], then you start to find out right?

Cassandra reports that she had never expected or desired to come to the United States. She touches on an important point in the above passage, which is that the experience of going to a new country involves leaving your home country, and thus a process of giving up the hope of finding what you need at home. Cassandra alludes to this personal struggle when she reports that she would like to "fight" in her country, would like to thrive there, and that this ideal kept her from investigating other possibilities or having an awareness of the extent to which immigration from Brazil to the United States occurred—even though she was surrounded by people with stories once she began considering the idea. However, in the face of being laid off from her job and feeling the prospect of financial and professional struggles, she considered the advice of a

friend who suggested immigration might be a good fit for her. All of a sudden, she became flooded with stories of experiences of others who had come. Indeed, these stories seem to have pushed her over the edge in her decision-making process, which caused her to begin to try to persuade her husband, who was reticent. Other women in the sample also discussed being influenced by stories told to them by others, most discussing friends or acquaintances who had made the trip to the United States. The power of narratives shared by friends, fellow churchgoers, and family members, was a common thread in the women's narratives as they discussed their decision-making process, and as they discussed the expectations that they had of financial opportunity in the United States.

What characterized the US as a good fit for Cassandra, according to her friend, was the fact that she was a hardworking woman, and nothing would be a barrier for her. This emphasis on hard work is a double edged sword: the United States is conceptualized as a country in which hard work pays off, which is appealing, but also one in which hard work is needed in order to survive, which ultimately is linked to a lack of self-care and a focus on material acquisitions. Cassandra indicates that she was expecting a land in which, yes, she had the opportunity to prosper, but that she was also aware that there would be a price, which was hard work. She does not indicate a naiveté about life being difficult in the United States, but rather a belief that the payoff would be worth it.

Throughout her narrative, Cassandra associates hard work and trials with subsequent victories and sense of accomplishment. The promise of hard work paying off was appealing for her, drawing her toward the new country. Her home country, on the other hand, felt less promising in terms of her marketability and financial opportunity. She did not trust in her ability to compete in the job market, particularly given her limited formal education, which stopped after acquiring a High School degree. However, she did trust her ability to work hard, and to persevere. Cassandra's profile is unique in that she had a substantial amount of savings when she immigrated to the United States. With a generous severance package and the sale of assets, she and her husband were able to put a

down payment on their own house within a year and a half of immigrating to the United States. Nevertheless, in spite of her significant financial advantage, she shared with the other women a sense of relative opportunity in the U.S. and relative lack thereof in Brazil.

For Kelsi, the prospect of immigration represented financial freedom as well, in particular the opportunity to provide for her daughter with more certainty. Kelsi lived on a farm outside a very small town in Brazil, with her partner's mother and her young daughter. Kelsi's partner immigrated before she did, and between his flirting with other women, gradually losing contact with her, and not providing consistently for their daughter, Kelsi felt the need to immigrate as a way to ensure her and her daughter's future. Below she describes the experience of deciding to come here:

> Then he started calling every fifteen days, there were times a month would go by. My daughter's things were almost gone and I didn't work, I just helped my mother-in-law with the house, then I said, 'Oh no, it won't do for me to keep waiting with arms crossed,' because [in town] there was no way to work, it was too far. I didn't have a motorcycle, I didn't have anything, I didn't have a car. That's when I said, 'Ah, I'm going to find a way to get away.' And in the meantime, I would talk to my mother, my mother was here for seven years already, my brother for six, and neither one had money to help me come. Then [my partner] would say, 'I also don't have money, I am still owing my debt.' We pay fourteen thousand dollars to come here… I had to end up here one way or another. My mother here, him here, I was already seeing messages online from other women and everything, I said, 'No, I'm going….' Messages like that from women to him online, women were here with whom he talked…. And with that I went into a despair, yea? With that I was not even thinking anymore, I said, 'I'm going, with him or not with him, I will give my daughter a future, or I will go [to town], since my sister lives [in town], or I'll go to my sister's house with a daughter, without a husband, without anything….' And I said, 'What now? Will I go with one hand in front and one behind to my sister, who already has three young children?'—because my sister got pregnant at thirteen—so I said, 'What now? Either I will go [to the United States] or I don't know what I will do' you know? That's when my mother could get only six thousand. And I said, 'I will go with these six and I will end up in Mexico and when I get to Mexico I will get the rest….' Then I said to the lady that I had twelve and my mother confirmed that I had twelve, but I didn't have twelve, I only had six. But I got to Mexico

> and my brother called, then I told him that if he didn't give me the rest of the money they were going to kill me there. But there wasn't any of that, you know? It was more of a blackmail you kow? (laughs). Then he said, 'No, don't worry, how will I get it You're crazy!' And I said, 'It's no use you cursing at me, I will not go back…." I was here, I said, 'There is no going back. Either I go forward, of I will be jailed or they will kill me here, it's one of the three….' And today I say, if it wasn't for me acting crazy, I would not be here, I would be there. I mean, a mother will never let anything lack for their child, but I don't know what I could be doing to make a better future for my daughter. So, thank God I am here, but my heart is there, it's only God.

Many of the women in the current sample are women who came with visitor visas and overstayed their visas. However, Kelsi represents one of two who came to the United States through the Mexican border. For those coming through Mexico, the journey is an expensive one, which they often pay off in their first couple of years in the United States. It is also an arduous one, with potentially fatal dangers as well as, for many women, the prospect of being sexually abused. For these immigrants who enter the country through the Mexican border, paying the debt comes before any chance at savings. The looming debt also makes the prospect of deportation that much more threatening. Kelsi's narrative is powerful in that she describes her decision to immigrate as one driven by despair and intense determination. She speaks of taking an incredible risk, and describes her journey as her lifeline, her one shot as far as she could see, or creating a tenable future for her daughter and being self-sufficient. Although the particular route she takes is not representative of the experiences of women in the current sample, she does speak to themes found across interview in the sense that immigrating into the United States was expected to provide her with financial renumeration, greater opportunity for self-determination, and the possibility to realize her dreams in a way that her life as she knew it in her home country could not.

Across the interviews, women described having focused, pre-immigration, on the financial possibilities they would find, giving little emphasis to possible difficulties or emotional concerns. Indeed, women described a sense of hope in their expectations, with

several indicating a sense of expected emotional well being as well, connected to the financial gains. For Rebeca, the immigration with her husband occurred in the face of difficult times emotionally that they hoped to recover from. The plan was to come and make money for one year as a couple, then return to Brazil and to Rebeca's two children. For Kelsi, the trip was an opportunity to be self-reliant in a way that she could not be as a stay-at –home mother living on a farm in a small town, while depending on the financial contributions of her daughter's father who was already in the United States. Immigration was her ticket to financial freedom and the opportunity to support her daughter with more certainty. For Helena, the trip was an adventure, a possibility to explore with no set return date. Across the interviews, women described expectations of gains, opportunity, and at times struggle, but not expectations of emotional costs or overwhelming difficulty.

Expectations Versus Reality

Often, the women's journeys were motivated by stories they heard of others who had come. Helena, for example, discusses the way in which hearing stories helped prepare her for the experience:

> Because I met people like that here, who were dentists, who were this, who were that in Brazil and arrive here to do housecleaning. So, I already knew people, you know, because my husband and I, at church we always talked, in Brazil, we always talked to people who had come here here and people … told the same story. They said: "Look, you I-don't-know-what, you're going to feel this way." When you go prepared for what you will feel you don't make a big deal out of the thing. So well, so it was bad, but it was not so much, it was not a shock, you know like, I was expecting it, I knew I would not, I would not have the same job because I also, I did not speak English, we did not have documentation, so we knew it was not going to be anything easy. I think when we prepare for what is much more difficult, if it is not that hard well you do not even get shocked you know?

Helena indicates that part of what she prepared for was the shift she would experience in her professional life, and the fact that for her, this was not a deterring factor. Helena highlights the importance of being prepared for the experience. Because she expected struggle, the struggle she experienced did not deal as strong a blow. She also discussed issues of language and documentation contributing to her expectations of the experience. Helena, who worked in Brazil as a dental hygienist, describes her subsequent experience of working as a housecleaner: "And well I am very ambitious, I like good things, I like expensive things and I know it's money that buys this right? (Laughs). Then when I started, the labor's fruit which is money, then you see hey, you clean houses, but you earn well, then I am like, what is the big deal about it? You know? Like, it's a blessing right?"

Helena highlights here a theme that was discussed among many of the women: the fact that doing unskilled labor in the United States is monetarily rewarding in a way that they did not experience in Brazil and in a way that motivated them to come, and then stay, here. One of the women discussed the idea that "it is better to be poor in the United States than poor in Brazil," referring to the sense of possibility and basic met needs that for her seem to be a given in the United States.

Other women also discussed having been motivated by stories they heard to make the decision to come to the United States. However, women differed in the extent to which they felt these portrayals of the immigration experience had adequately prepared them for the journey. The quest, then, the goal-oriented journey to a strange land, was one where women's lived experience was often discussed as being at odds with what their expectations had been, even when they had tried to prepare themselves. Women often discussed feeling deceived, often too late.

Adriana reported that she and her husband had been told that it would be easy to get documentation, that they would be welcomed into a friend's house and have their own room, and that the experience would be relatively easy. She discusses her experience of discovering that everything was not as it had been made out to be:

> The experience was terrible, like, a lot of disillusionment because we really believed in the guy I think that was our mistake, you know? I mean, he helped, because he really helped financially for us to come, but like, everything he had said was not at all what- what happened, you know, and then we got very frustrated. We became, like, but then what we had already been through… we had already sold everything there, and also, when everything started, when we arrived we thought Miami was beautiful, it looked like Barra da Tijuca, which is a great place in Brazil yea? In Rio, yea, and everything. We said, we are living in Barra da Tijuca and all, only later we really got it, because we thought, this is just the beginning, beginnings are really hard, and everything, but then when time started going by and we saw it wasn't any of that…. It's alright sleeping there, because you think: I'll sleep there for two or three days OK, but now for you to sleep four months in the corner of a living room you know? With your children with you and other people passing by and seeing your feet, you know? For something that… you came thinking that the person had a place to host you… and they didn't you know? And then they started getting impatient with the children, all that stuff, so we felt, well horrible, became devastated, because we said: man what have we done?

Adriana describes a process of gradual realization of the position that she and her husband had put themselves in, of the finality of their decision and of the faulty expectations on which their plans had been built. She describes a sense of having been duped by the friend who prepared them for the journey and promised to host them. Adriana speaks for many of the women in this sample when she says that she felt surprised and disillusioned by the reality of her experience, and when she describes the moment of realization that there has been a point of no return: "what have we done?" Women often described a lack of awareness of the difficulty of the immigration experience, as well as a sense that it is not possible to fully prepare for the experience, much as one tries. From this point of no return, women's narratives revealed the individualized ways in which they dealt with this realization.

Price to Pay for Quest Goals

The women discussed their immigration experiences as choices that came with a cost. Part of the quest, then, and part of moving forward, was making peace with leaving things behind. These things included assets they had sold, leaving extended family members, and in several cases, leaving children behind. In the following passage, Mariana describes part of her experience coming into this country, crossing the border form Mexico. The 'coiote' she describes is the leader in charge of smuggling in the group:

> I arrived here in the United Stated with the clothes on my back, I arrived like a living rotting corpse, because to cross the ocean, that water stinking, of mud, because in the water you climb the banks like, there is this loose mud against the walls, you grab the reeds and they descend and get us again and push us you know? There were people who lost even sneakers, shoes, left it trapped in the water, the mud, the banks to climb, a horrible thing. Then we went, and the "coiote" said, "It's time, it's time," then we went, and he took us to the edge of the river, what a shame my bags of clothing all stayed there, I think they do something with that, sell it, something, because it's so much clothing, because it is only quality things that the women take there, because there are a lot of people who buy very good things to travel. Each shoe such, gosh, the most beautiful things that stayed behind, all those bags, that pile was such a shame. But what to do right? You want to pass right? You want to move forward… we left everything and crossed.

As Mariana describes her experience leaving her things behind, she echoes the voices of other women who left so much behind, and whose choices to come here were met with great cost. Mariana describes a viscerally disturbing image, mud and struggle, grabbing at reeds and hoping to survive, an ordeal with the promise of better things ahead. This passage shows the internal conflict that she faced as she realized, perhaps for the first time, that things would not be as she had expected, that the reality would be starker than she realized. However, at that point there was no turning back. She did not

realize she would have to leave everything behind until the suitcases were piled up and discarded, until she saw the shoes slip off the feet of others and felt the damp earth on her body. Although Mariana describes her own unique experience of arriving in the United States, she speaks for most of the women in the sample symbolically, when she describes the inevitable choice: Do you want to move forward? Do you want to pass? This is your toll. Too late to turn back now.

Evolution of Quest

Although women often described coming to the United States with specific goals in mind, they also described a process of transition. The quest of immigration was very much characterized by mutability, with the particular goal that drove women to leave their home countries not necessarily being the same goal that kept them in the United States. Mariana, for example, demonstrates throughout the interview a sense of being tied to American soil. Although she expresses a deep desire to return home to her children, she is tied here by the fear of not being able to return should she leave (and thus not be able to replenish herself financially) and because she has found herself committed to new financial endeavors since being here. She is tied here largely by the fact that her undocumented status makes her return unlikely and very dangerous, so that she has to make sure to obtain as much as she can during her stay, to be certain that she has obtained her objective. However, over the course of her stay, she has found that being here affords her the opportunity to pay for her daughter's education, as well.

When she was coming to the United States, Mariana's goal was to better her house a little, which was not very good according to her, and to get a nicer car than she would have been able to afford, and to save a little money in addition to paying off her travel debt. Six and a half years later, these goals have largely been achieved: she has bettered her house, paid her debt, and is paying her daughter's education. And yet she still feels the pull of the United States and feels it more strongly perhaps than the pull toward her children, or perhaps more strongly because of the pull toward her children,

given that her children embody a big reason behind her continued stay, expressing a sense of powerlessness over her condition and a sense that it is unavoidable. While she discusses not having reached her goal yet, she is not clear about what that goal is and in fact makes it appear as though that goal may be a moving target. When asked when she will know the right time to return to Brazil, she states, "I don't know. When the time is right God will send us away from here," not long after saying "If I could go home tomorrow I would," blaming her daughter's college expenses. She does not state that once her daughter's college is paid she will leave, however, indicating that there is something she has not reached yet, some unnamed or unnamable thing, and very clear that she will not go back in the same condition in which she came.

Paula echoes Mariana's experience, stating, "When you get here, other dreams come, other needs appear." All of a sudden, what would have been enough to return to Brazil no longer looks like enough once one has it. Many women, in fact, touched on this idea that to go back to their home country in the same or worse condition that they came would be unacceptable. The key to their quest having meaning and having been worthwhile would be their having something to show for it upon returning to their home country. What they would need to have to show for themselves was something that was almost always not clearly elaborated. For women who discuss a shifting, amorphous purpose to their immigration, it also appears that this vagueness indicates an indefinite endpoint to their journey. For women who arrived with dreams of returning to loved ones in Brazil, or with a specific amount of savings, this shift in purpose and goals appears particularly troublesome, relative to women who came with no definite plans or with plans to stay indefinitely.

Divided Self: "One foot in each country"

> The immigrant carries- because sometimes you live with one foot in the United States and one foot in Brazil, you are not defined.

Throughout the interviews, women describe a sense of feeling psychologically divided between two countries. Maria discusses this phenomenon above. Women often describe themselves as living a transnational experience, with a divided emotional life, as well as financial obligations that link them with their home country.

Living with Ambivalence

> and I like it here as much as I like Brazil. There are people who say, like, I don't like Brazil, I get mad when someone says, oh I do not like Brazil, I love this place and I do not like Brazil. Because I am like a mother who has two children, I like both the same. When I'm in Brazil I'm crazy for Brazil but but I'm crazy also to return here, and when I'm here I'm dying to go to Brazil. I like both equally, I like both countries the same. I do not have a saying like: ah I love Brazil more than here, but I'm here because I need to be. No, I love it here the same way I love Brazil. And I suffer when something happens here, in the same way I suffer when something happens in Brazil, the same way. When there was that accident with the Twin Towers, I suffered the same way as if I were in Brazil, as if it was something of mine that had broken, because I like both countries equally, equally, there is no difference, if I say there is a difference it's a lie, I like them both the exact same. I get crazy when I'm in Brazil, I'm dying to leave, I'm here I'm dying to go to Brazil, to buy a ticket to go to Brazil. My mother says: "Decide for God's sake!" I say, "There is no way mother, it's two children and I do not know which one I like more, I like them both the same, I have to have to have both," but it is very good, it's complicated...

Rebeca discusses not only affection for both countries, but a sense of ownership for both. She has taken on the United States as a part of herself. The metaphor of motherhood is especially interesting here because of its association with intimacy and permanent attachment. Her process of negotiating her immigrant identity has involved an appropriation of her new social context, an embracing of both rather than a rescinding of one or a sense of displacement from both.

Part of the sense of having a divided self is working through complex relationships with both countries, and trying to decide how immersion in the host society

has affected and changed oneself. Rebecca discusses this conflict richly in the following excerpt:

> And it's very funny because we never stop to do a, to see how the time went, it's only when we are talking with someone that you say: Gosh it's already 13 years and it seems that everything is the same to be honest. It's all the same .... It's as if you had traded one [for the other]—when you come you come with the expectation of just raising the money to buy all, everything you want in Brazil, a house a car, a beach house and live the good life. When you already stay longer, you already start to get used to the country, to the people, you can't get used to Brazil any more, whoever says you get used to Brazil, you don't anymore, you do not get used to it, I go to Brazil, I stay 4, 5, 6 months in Brazil, you don't get used to it, when it gets to be 3, 4 months, you are dying to come back... When you're in Brazil you start thinking like: 'Wow, I lost 13 years, now I no longer have my friends, I don't have that uncle, that aunt is gone and I didn't see her, my friends all moved, married, had children. And life in Brazil, it is happier than here. It has no money, no one has money .... Since you work a lot in the United States, you find it very strange to see people every day sitting at the door, talking, having a beer, having a barbeque at their door, with a grill outside and everyone talking, you think it's very, I think it's very disorganized you know? I do not know if it's because I'm a long time here I find it very disorganized you know? And when I'm here, I see, hey, here is more civilized. The people here are more civilized. They talk lower, they talk, here you have more security to go out with jewelry on the street, have a good car. Here you dream but there is the chance of everything being realized .... Here is a place where you dream and it is realized, there is a place that you dream and only dream, forget the rest. Unless you are from a wealthy family…. Either you work hard or it doesn't happen, it simply stayed, the project stayed on paper. So when I arrive in Brazil I say: we live two lives, me, me when I'm in Brazil I see that you end up living two lives and the personality of the person, the person's personality, it changes automatically when it arrives here in the United States. (Your personality changed?) Not mine, I see, I notice people arriving, the personality of some people, it changes.

Because she begins this self-examining monologue with a statement of how little one thinks about this process until sitting down with someone to discuss it, this particular interview segment appears to be a glimpse into her internal processes and in particular her ways of making meaning of her experiences. She appears to construct the narrative

as she is telling it, rather than just reciting something that has been well established as a structure in her mind. She contradicts herself at times in the passage, changing her mind or rethinking the position that she holds relative to others in her life and relative to the two countries she inhabits with such passion.

It is at times, in the above passage, difficult to differentiate between the general "you" statements and the "you" statements that reflect the participants' own experiences. She appears to be speaking about herself at first when saying that "you" change, as she references her own length of time in the United States as a reference point ("I've been here 13 years"), seeming to also reference her own struggles: "It's only when we are talking with someone—" presumably the interviewer—"that you say: Gosh it's already 13 years and it seems as though everything is the same to say the truth. It's all the same." Rebeca indicates that, ironically, after spending so much time here, things seem exactly the same. Indeed, she is referencing a sort of failed quest in which the object of her desire did not provide her with the peace of mind, security, change, or meaning that she expected, in spite of the cost. This revelation that she shares with the interviewer appears to keep her somewhat conflicted because although the quest does not hold the meaning she expected it to, she does not feel that she can go back and undo it. Indeed, the fact that it has been this long has allowed her to adjust to a new reality, as well as eroded her former reality, so much so that she no longer fits in her old context, even while she struggles to reconcile with the reality of her new one.

Rebeca shares a sense of loss as she recalls the loved ones who have passed away or moved on in their lives, "I lost thirteen years." She proceeds to engage in a complex dance of cost-benefit analysis, attempting to enumerate logically what must feel conflicted and entangled in her heart. She has exchanged one reality for another, which she cannot choose between, and describes a narrative in which Brazil is calmer, more free, in a way she no longer understands after having lived here; and the way in which America is more "civilized" and "secure" in a way she appreciates much more after having lived here. She states that life in Brazil is "happier" moments after sharing the

losses she suffered in Brazil, and moments before criticizing the disorganization in her home country. She discusses the expectation to come and make money to "live the good life back home," and the subsequent realization that "things are the same," then later discusses how much more she appreciates the United States. Her ambivalence around her immigration experience are entangled in ambivalence about the countries themselves, neither of which she can fully embrace, neither of which she can let go of, as she feels her identity split between the two. Given her reference to the countries as her children, there is a sense that choosing one over the other one would be rejecting a part of herself.

In this monologue, Rebeca drifts into a complex discussion of the conflicts of the transnational experience, in which one is a part of two entities which can never meet, and is thus split between two opposing worlds, inhabiting both and neither at the same time. She discusses the ways in which she has changed, her reality expanded to include equal appreciation for aspects of both cultures, which cannot coexist, and which she bounces back and forth between in her months-long trips to Brazil which only make her miss the United States.

At first, she states that nothing has changed, then discusses the sense that she has changed completely, but at the end, she rejects the confession she has made in the middle of the passage, saying she has not changed, and criticizing others for having changed into less generous people. She highlights, then, the complexity of working through the struggle that one inevitably goes through in being thrown into these different cultural realities. In differentiating herself from the people who changed in negative ways, she seems to assert her own success in having negotiated the changes well. Her final lack of acknowledgement of her own changing identity also seem to imply a deeper need to not have changed, to still belong in her "home" country. Even while the immigration experience has expanded her horizons, she does not wish to become so different that she cannot return home again—even while she recognizes that this line may have in some ways already been crossed, since she cannot stand to be "home" for more than a few months.

Connections Back Home

For many women, connections to loved ones back home continue to not only be important emotionally, but also exert considerable influence on the ways in which they manage their stay in the United States. Often, women discussed sending financial resources to or buying material things for extended family members back home. There is a sense in which these women could not fully embody their lives in the United States, as their financial and emotional lives are divided between two countries. For women who had left children in Brazil to come to the United States, they described a particularly significant psychological impact from the distance they experienced from their children.

Kelsi, one of three women in the sample who immigrated while leaving children behind, describes her experience:

> For me I don't consider that I was a mother since I had the courage to leave her, but on the other hand I feel like a warrior for trying to make a better future for her. So it's a lot of things that we think .... I have an adoptive brother, he is 15 years old today, and… to me a mother is the one who raises someone not the one who makes them. So I, in my mind I'm the same way, I just made my daughter, the one who raises her is my mother-in-law, so this, it's just this negative thought that I have that I can not have her affection again .... And my thought is if I do not leave here in five years I do not need to go anymore, because at five years old she will know, she already knows, but she will know more, be aware of more things, so I do not think so I can rescue my daughter anymore.... and now I have to race against time, because it goes fast, I can not believe I have so much time here already, this time, well, for me is a long time you know....

Kelsi shares that her sense of herself as a mother has been compromised by her decision to leave her family behind. She struggles with her self-definition as a mother, feeling on the one hand that she has abandoned her daughter and betrayed her role, indicating a sense of self-reprehension and shame ("I don't consider that I was a mother

because I had the courage to leave her"), but on the other hand feeling "like a warrior for trying to give her a better future." The moment that she decided to leave her daughter behind, she went against her definition of what a mother would to. Even while she feels that what she did was inevitable, and even that it will benefit her daughter in the long run, she cannot fully forgive herself and does not expect her daughter to forgive her, although she does hope for it. Kelsi describes providing for her daughter as the primary object of her immigration project, and yet she psychologically undoes her own justifications. Kelsi demonstrates in this passage what many of the women showed during their interviews, that their logical or thought-out reasons were at war with their emotions, that there was a conflict between perceived quantitative gains and psychological costs.

What Kelsi also touches on in the passage above is an awareness that material resources do not make up for emotional resources. At one point in the interview she discusses having been able to give her daughter a two-year birthday party that cost $1,500, as an illustration of the means that she has attained during her time in the Untied States, and the extent to which she can better provide compared with when she was in Brazil. However, in this passage she laments the time not spent with her daughter. No matter how well her mother-in-law cares for her daughter, Kelsi's presence is priceless. She tries to counteract the damage to her relational bond with her daughter by giving herself a deadline: when her daughter is five years old, she plans to return to Brazil, hoping that she will be able to recover her daughter's affections. The language she uses, when she expresses her desire to "rescue" her daughter, is telling. Kelsi sees the immigration experience as a trial and a struggle, with her racing against time to achieve her goals without losing her daughter, the true prize at stake.

Rose, in discussing her decision to leave her daughters behind, discusses the considerations that were not made before immigrating: "We only thought about the fact that they would be well taken care of, we didn't think about the psychological aspect. The decision when you make it to come here is influenced by many things, and many things you don't think about at the time." She points to an experience alluded to by many

of the women, which is that their expectations for their experiences did not take into account all of the emotional and psychological factors involved.

Women also discussed having links to loved ones back home for other reasons. They discussed sending money back home and paying for the expenses of family members. Kelsi discussed paying for her sister's drug rehab. Maria discussed paying for various family expenses including her aunt's cancer treatment. Coming from a poor family in Brazil, she has taken on the role of caring for them financially since immigrating to the United States:

> my family, like I told you, it's a big family, but it's one that, it's a poor family. We are a poor family in Brazil. So my stay here, when I arrived here I already wanted to help my grandmother… I finished her house and I already started working on my mother's house. Then there was an aunt who had breast cancer, then I [moved] to my aunt's treatment, to help her until we could see how it was going to be. Then now recently, my uncle had a problem, and he went to the hospital, and so, this makes you stay longer, it delays your return to your city… So like, it's a—it's a day by day experience, there's one for you to help today, one for you to help tomorrow, another one for you to help, because the family is big there appears necessity, and you end up helping and staying longer.

There is a way in which paradoxically, connections to those back home, both financial and emotional, can actually contribute to longer periods of distance from those loved ones. Women describe a sense of duty and love that causes them to send financial resources back to their home country, while keeping them physically distant from those very people who are so important to them. For some women, they take on a caretaking role and have difficulty thinking of giving up that role by turning their backs on the possibility of continued financial resources to help not only themselves, but also their families.

For Paula, she sees helping loved ones in Brazil as a privilege. She discusses the immigration experience as one that taught her to value her family in a new way. For her,

coming to the United States was largely prompted by a desire for freedom, particularly as a woman. She had no work experience and did not get along with her family. She describes her journey as one that helped her to mature and grow in many ways, sometimes painfully. Below she describes her desire to care for her parents in Brazil, whom she sees about once a year when she visits:

> I learned, I learned, I think one of the main things I learned was to appreciate my family, that's what I learned (crying). Yea, gosh, I love my parents dearly now…. The fact that we live far away is very difficult…. I left Brazil I was almost twenty. And I always had everything in my parents' house, I lacked nothing, so you see like, gosh my father did everything for me, and in a certain way, we—I took it for granted. So, kind of, today, I—that's why I say nowadays, whatever I can do for my parents I will do, for this reason. Because like, sometimes you have and you don't value what you have. But thank God I haven't lost either of them, I have both, but there are a lot of people who suffer, who are here and suffer because their parents are there and many cannot go [to see their parents].

She discusses the ways in which living far away allowed her to see how much support she had had growing up. There is a hint of guilt to this passage, a way in which her gratitude propels her toward action to in some way pay back. There is also a sense in which she is providing for her parents monetarily what she cannot provide with her physical presence.

You Can't Go Home Again

One of the ways in which women expressed feeling divided was in the sense of not feeling that they would be able to return to their home country. In fact, according to a couple of the women, they believe it is more difficult to return to Brazil after immigrating to the United States, than to leave one's home country to come here. Luisa is one of these women, and explains her perspective below:

here we are more than Chameleons right? The way things come we go accepting, cold comes, we adapt, heat comes, we adapt. Here in this country it's like that, immigrating is very serious .... Look, people in Brazil have no idea what this is here .... We leave, I heard someone say that the Brazilian does two crazy things: one is when you leave your little life of BBQ on the weekend in Brazil, that people where everything is a party, everything is a holiday ... write the check on Friday, for it to bounce on Monday, get the money on Wednesday and everything's okay .... Then you leave this little life, and come here, which is a highly consumerist country, it is a country where you have to produce .... In Brazil if you arrive at the home of any relative you live 1, 2, 3 years, here if you come spend a week they will charge you grocery money. And when the Brazilian comes here and adapts to this mutation, and after you are here to return ot Brazil again, you will only suffer. I would not return to Brazil again, understand? .... The second [crazy thing] is after you're fully integrated here, to go back to that little life. It is very difficult to adjust. I think in my case this return would be worse. Because you know these two worlds, understand? Then you say: ah, but the family's there, yeah, but you go there and visit and when you for example, you go and stay 1, 2, s 3 weeks, you already are normal and now everybody's dying for you to leave and you are also dying to go. (Laughs) ... You understand? So well unfortunately you leave one world and come to another and to go back I think is worse. At least the people I talk too [say] that adjustment is very serious. I was just reading an interview saying that most Brazilians who return, they enter into a serious depression and the worst is the non-acceptance of people who do not know this world in which they lived, understand? Because you don't, you can't brake, you have to—if you will slow down the pace of your life—but you cannot simply change, it's not like that. So the person returns with different ways, with different habits that are no longer those of the Brazilians, [and] when you go back there, people do not accept your transition and you'll have to go back to how they are.

Luisa discusses the fact that the immigration experience to the United States is a serious undertaking, and one which involves great loss on the one hand, emotionally and relationally, but financial opportunity on the other hand. She contrasts a sense of ease and familial community in her home country, with a rush for efficient gains and transactional relationships in the United States. However, in the process she discusses a change of self, in which cultural shock gives way to a chameleon-like adaptation, in

which you are able to inhabit your new world, facing changes and challenges head-on with flexibility and grace. So much so, that to return would only yield suffering.

In the passage above, Luisa discusses the challenges in re-adaptation to one's home country as involving challenges based on one's own newly set ways, as well as relational challenges. Whereas earlier in the passage she describes a sense of complete trust in the welcoming care of family in Brazil, she discusses the returning immigrant facing a sense of alienation from family, who after a couple of weeks become impatient for their departure, as do they. She discusses these challenges as based on non-acceptance by people who do not understand the immigrant's experiences. In this way, Luisa indicates that returning home means returning as a stranger to the very people with whom you expect to feel the most connected. You are not the same person you once were, and once you change you cannot undo those changes easily, perhaps not at all. This difficulty frustrates the expectations of those in your life, and also creates barriers to your connection with them. You are no longer one of them. Home is no longer home.

Luisa frames her argument in the description of the United States and Brazil as "two worlds," and in the transformative power of knowledge and exposure. Simply by knowing a new world, you become different yourself, no longer returning to your old world the same person. She states that the returning immigrant has different customs, alien customs, and to truly return home would mean shedding your knowledge, shedding your chameleon skin which has served you so well and the experiences which have made you the person you have become, in order to meet the expectations of your waiting family. To return home fully, in a way that waiting loved ones would understand and accept, would be to abandon important parts of yourself. Luisa states that she would never think to return to Brazil after coming here, perhaps feeling that the price is too high.

In addition to the sense of alienation that Luisa indicates, she also implies that the returning immigrant has expectations that are not met upon their arrival. She states that she has heard stories of people who return and become depressed, and also states that

there is a desire to come back to the United States very soon after arriving in Brazil. The shift exists on multiple levels: internal, relational, and economic. Part of what is difficult to return to is the very life that one must miss upon immigrating to the United States: a life of fluidity and tranquility in spite of potential financial uncertainty. "You cannot brake," Luisa states, as though adapting to life in the United States includes starting an engine that stays turned on even after one departs. Just as women in the sample often discussed living in the United States with thoughts of Brazil, Luisa suggests that returning to Brazil immediately triggers thoughts of the United States. The once-immigrant and now returning citizen continues to have one foot in each country, even upon stepping foot on native shores. There is a sense in which knowledge of two worlds means a perpetual division between the two.

Sense of Legitimacy and Belonging

One persistent theme across the interviews was the participants' discussion of a struggle for a sense of legitimacy and belonging. The women differed in the ways in which they made sense of their experiences and in the extent to which they felt a sense of belonging, but all of them demonstrated a process of meaning making by which they attempted to or struggled to define their positionality in relation to their new world.

Meaning of documentation status

Participants discussed the important ways in which having or not having legal immigration status in the United States affected their sense of self. These ways included feelings of physical mobility in terms of being able to walk freely in the world, relationships with employers and loved ones, and also their sense of self and agency. For those women who were undocumented, the discussion included how much claim they feel they could lay to the land they were in, how much ownership they feel of the space they occupy. Women answered these questions differently. But, invariably, a woman's

documentation status was discussed as having a profound impact, although the lived experiences of this impact was not uniform.

Let us look at a quote from Kelsi. Her quote is a powerful representation of a sentiment echoed by several of the women, who communicated a deep fear rooted in the undocumented immigrant's experience.

> I thought it would be easier. Here we become lost. We don't know how to speak, we are afraid of the police. I would see a plane, I would go into a panic…. I worked at a Dunkin Donuts. My boss would pick us up there—she was also Brazilian. I would see a plane, I would run into the car because I was afraid. The others would say, "girl, it's not like that, you don't have to be afraid." But it is, you have to run in Mexico because of the police, you have to run into the car, you have to roll in the bushes because of the police, so you get here- I took about eight months to get used to it, to seeing a plane and being more relaxed. So you feel very much like, like you are in prison. You can't go out, you just have to walk around with your passport, at any time someone can stop you and deport you. Even now, like, I have already adjusted a bit, but the fear still exists. We imagine something else, we think it will be easier, but it is not. … The fear of you being stopped, of you being jailed, you don't have anything- imagine! I would imagine this: my God, I owe 14 thousand dollars, if the police deports me what will I do? I don't have anything, I don't have anything to pay anything, so I mean, you live with that fear. Even after I paid my debt I am afraid, I said I worked so hard, I sweated, paid my debt, and now if I leave and don't have anything? To return with nothing- so I mean, it still exists. You always live with fear. You imagine there that it is a paradise, but you get here and the reality is completely different.

Kelsi's analogy of being in prison indicates a sense of utter powerlessness, a feeling of being "stuck" which makes her unable to live here and also unable to go back home. She references the debt she incurred in coming to the United States, in order to be brought across the border, and discusses her need to pay the debt and to have something to show for herself as particular factors in her anxiety about being deported. Being in the United States as an undocumented immigrant means that at any moment, the life you have worked so hard to establish may be ripped away. Kelsi is not afraid of deportation

because she is afraid to go back home; in fact, much of her life is spent dreaming of returning home to reunite with her daughter. Her fear is based on the chance that everything she is basing her energy and her existence on could be torn from her. She does not fear deportation in and of itself, but the possibility that she could return home with nothing to show for herself, in fact with less than she had when she left, which would mean for her that the journey she has undertaken and the risks she has endured would be for naught.

Kelsi also alludes to the fact that her expectations were for the United States to be "a paradise," indicating that she was unprepared for the physical or psychological impacts of existing here as an undocumented immigrant. She imagined a reality in which she would easily be able to reach her goals and return home, and the reality is one in which she lives in fear and feels restricted in her daily life.

Kelsi speaks to the ways in which her experiences coming across the border from Mexico traumatized her and impacted her ability to relate to her new cultural context with any sense of ownership or ease. Her experience running from authorities in Mexico primed her for a particularly acute state of terror in the face of daily events such as seeing a plane overhead. Kelsi's experience of having come to the United States through the Mexican border does not echo the experiences of the majority of women in the sample, most of who came with visas and either overstayed their visas or became residents or citizens. However, her experience of helplessness driven by her undocumented status, a helplessness that compounds her sense of marginalization as a foreigner in a new land, does echo the experiences of several women. For women in my sample who are undocumented, this fact often presented itself during our interviews as a central fact in their lives. Often, undocumented status contributed to a sense of unease, uncertainty about the future, lack of agency, and marginalization.

Helena had the unusual experience of winning a lottery to obtain permanent residency for herself and her family, only to have it reneged. Two weeks after receiving their social security numbers and work permits in the mail, she received another letter

stating that it had been a mistake. Helena and her family had been advised by a friend to hire a paralegal for the process and not a lawyer, given that the process was expected to be simple. However, there was a mistake made in the paperwork in terms of clearly identifying the law that allowed them to obtain documentation from the United States rather than applying and waiting for documentation from their home country:

> When we went to the interview the woman said: 'Look, everything is fine and whatever, but you need to go back, because you need start the process from Brazil.' Then I said, 'What? Return?' So I went and thought: I wonder if it's back to my house? Then she said: 'no, go back to Brazil.' Oh, but then it was horrible, Gosh, that day the ground gave way. Because imagine her saying 'Go home,' you know, like, then I told her 'My home is here.' Until it was explained, I know I went crazy at the time, and yeah. And then, what can be done? It's a long time we've been in this fight, because we got to the point of receiving the number for the greencard, and we received our social, our work permit, two weeks later came a letter saying that there was a mistake that they did not have available numbers for that year. So it was, well, horrible.

For Helena, returning to her home country to wait for documentation was not a possibility. After years of living in the United States, regardless of documentation status, she feels that this is her home. Although she had heretofore been undocumented, she nevertheless had felt a sense of ownership over her physical space given the life that she has built here with her family. Unlike Kelsi or Mariana, who continue to hope to return to Brazil to resume lives with their children with their gains, Helena represents the majority of women in the sample who do not plan to return to their home country any time soon, if at all. She is not in the majority, however, in that her journey started out that way, rather than shifting into a relatively permanent arrangement. The fact that her process of documentation was halted, and promised benefits denied her and her family, was a challenge to her own previously held sense of legitimacy and belonging in the United States.

Helena describes the struggle of living in the United States, undocumented, as living in a consistent state of fear. She and her husband have drivers' licenses that will expire soon, which they were able to obtain when they received their social security numbers in the mail, but now have no prospects of renewing due to the paperwork being rescinded. They continue to drive, but he has misplaced his driver's license and her license is from out of state. She discusses the sense of powerlessness and fear that she experiences:

> I say: 'God, what is a Green card,' you know? It is nothing. And, well, it's very difficult, you know? A few days ago actually the police stopped my husband and, goodness, him with a photocopy of his license. So then there is that thing, that fear—you know, a fear? You—you living in fear. What will happen? And so, it is something that I do not even like to talk about, but well, what about my son's college? My son was not born here, you know? So, well, yea we don't like to even, even think about it.... So I know that we can't suffer in anticipation right? But well, it's something kind of, the future is a bit concerning. But I have something in my head, that I will only leave if I go dragged by the hair from here, because I like it here too much.

As Helena discusses the fear that she experiences due to her lack of a Green card, the cheer leaves her voice and she becomes tearful. In this passage, she describes the conflict between on the one hand feeling that a Green card is "nothing," because of her faith in God rather than a sheet of paper or a card; and on the other hand, the daily fear that accompanies her, not only for herself but for her family. She utilizes faith as a coping strategy, and attempts to live by faith, but the physical realities of living without proper documentation, and of losing rights that she and her family have tasted, prove daunting. She also touches on the intergenerational impact of her documentation status. She worries about the future that her children may have in a country that does not recognize them as rightful inhabitants.

Cassandra, who has a social security number but no work permit or residency, describes her documentation status as something that does not define her:

> I don't have this fear like, that insecurity of being here illegally ... that never made me feel insecure, I believe in myself, you know? I believe in myself and like, I grab onto the word of God like, I supported, we support ourselves in that God says that wherever we step with the soles of our feet will be ours by inheritance ... this here is mine too! Because this here does not belong to the American—this here belongs to God, you understand? So I can become an American here, that is not a barrier for me, at any time, it does not ... it does not make me feel insecure in any way, and I never had any obstacles here, I never felt treated in a way that made me get to the point of saying, "No, I want to go." On the contrary.

Cassandra discusses her lack of fear of her undocumented status, giving her faith in God as a reason, as well as discarding earthly standards or principalities as primary. According to Cassandra, she need not be concerned about her legal status and does not feel insecure because the land does not belong to Americans, but to God. In this way she not only assuages any potential insecurity, but also lays claim to this land through her connection with the higher power who is the true and rightful owner of the land. She demonstrates a different meaning making process, in which her sense of belonging is not dictated by her documentation status, but by her own ability to succeed and make her own way, particularly in the context of a higher power divinely supporting her journey. Cassandra's sense of agency and self-definition then, is supported by her faith in God and helps her to claim her space in the United States regardless of her legal status.

However, even while Cassandra reports a lack of anxiety over documentation status, she also reports having experienced deep distress when she realized that her son would not be able to be documented through marriage. She had advised him to find an American woman to marry, and instead he fell in love with a newly immigrated Brazilian woman who shortly thereafter became pregnant. He married the woman and left the seminary in which he had been enrolled. Cassandra states that when she found out about

the pregnancy, she was "frustrated, but I didn't know I was frustrated. I simply cried all the time. I was driving, I was crying, I was working at the day care and crying. I went out in the morning, I didn't see the flowers, I didn't see the colors, I didn't see anything." Cassandra therefore demonstrates significant attachment to her dreams for her son, possibly assigning a different meaning to her son's legal status than to her own. Said Cassandra, "I had a dream of seeing him graduate ... he is my first child ... and we have that feeling that if we cannot steer the first one, it becomes more difficult –(sobbing)— I'm sorry." Cassandra implies a deep attachment to the education and documentation status of her son, and the fact that he leaves seminary to marry another Brazilian immigrant, rather than remaining in the seminary and finding an American woman to marry, means that her dreams for him are not realized. She takes the loss hard and she takes it personally; she indicates that he, as her firstborn, represents the hope she has for all of her children. His success and his ability to reach a more elevated level academically and in terms of legal status would have given her a sense of success and meaning, it appears, and the loss of the dream drove her into a depression that suggests that Cassandra experiences her children as extensions of herself, representations of her own success in the world. Part of the meaning of documentation status that that the women in the sample described was ambivalence about the position they had put their children in, where the children also belonged neither here nor there, through no choice of their own. Cassandra also expresses the fact that, had her son become documented, he would have been able to provide the rest of the family with legal status:

> I said, son, the choice is yours, I just gave you advice, you know? About what would be best for you, but the choice is yours. You are the one who knows, I don't depend on you at any time and don't want you to have that as a burden for you. Because he thought that if he legalized himself, he would legalize us all, everybody…. And it really could have happened, right? But it was not God's purpose, he met [his wife]….

Cassandra's stake, then, in the documentation of her son, was also her own chance at documented status. In a way, her son was carrying the hope of the whole family, much as she encouraged him not to think of it in that way. Cassandra's story illustrates the struggle that the women faced in defining themselves, rather than being defined. On the one hand, she does not allow her documentation status to define her, gathering strength and a sense of purpose from the belief that God is at the helm of her life and directing her destiny. She does not feel daunted or disempowered, but feels a sense of empowerment in her journey as an immigrant, conquering and claiming her space. On the other hand, she would like her children to have opportunities and more choices in their lives, and she placed her sense of purpose in the successes of her children. On the one hand she is victorious, but on the other she acknowledges an emotional toll to the journey. Her son leaving the seminary and missing what she saw as an opportunity to gain legal status provoked a depression in her that may have been the build-up of losses over the course of her life.

Race and Ethnicity

While women readily discussed the ways in which documentation status affected them, their sense of selves, and the degree to which they felt a sense of belonging in the United States, their discussion of race and ethnicity in their experience was often less fluid. Women were able to allude to their sense of cultural "otherness" but did not always link that to racial or ethnic experience. However, when they did, it was a vivid representation of their immigration experience and the difficulty of self-definition in the context of being defined by others.

Bete is an example of someone who was able to verbalize her experience in racial and ethnic terms. According to her, her dark skin appears to be a defining factor in how she is viewed in American society:

> I think the only thing that affects me most is not so much to be Brazilian but to be dark-skinned. I say I'm black, they say I'm not black, they say I'm chocolate. (Laughter) (They who?) Americans .... Every time I say I'm black, they say: "You're not black, you're chocolate." Then I said: "And what is the difference?" They say: "you have beautiful skin and you do not have the characteristics of blacks here, the other features, hair, though my nose is not all that, but the nose is also different and the skin much darker [for blacks]. In Brazil I'm called morena, right? ... but here there is no such thing, it would be 'brunnette', but I'm not brunnete. Sometimes people look at me differently due to the fact that I am darker-skinned, but not because I am Brazilian, because when they notice I start talking and they notice that I am not from here, that I am a foreigner, then it changes the way people see me. (Ah. .. How so?) The way they look. It is not even that, they don't say anything, but you can notice that there is a resistance as soon as they see me, so when I start talking, then they soon notice that I have an accent, it's as if they looked frightened and suddenly they started to look happy. It's something like, It a difference in the gaze of the person, so the only thing I notice that is different is that. When they know that I am morena, but I'm not American, so the fact that I am foreign is more acceptable than the fact that I'm morena, at least that is how I see it. And also there's also the fact of the area that I work in, I now work with obstetrics and they depend on me a lot, and people have direct contact with the nurse, are very dependent on the nurse. So I think they feel comfortable when they see that I am a foreigner. (Laughs) So I noticed this difference.

Bete begins this passage by making the poignant statement that "the only thing that affects me the most is not so much being Brazilian, but being dark-skinned." She thus communicates that, above and beyond the struggles of being an immigrant, the sense of being identified by her dark skin has a stronger valence in her experience. In fact, the fact of being an immigrant, which may carry with it a sense of otherness, becomes a source of relief from the stigma of dark skin, with others first looking frightened or stricken, then happy when she opens her mouth and reveals herself to not be African-American. She shares the sense that others look at her with unease, until she opens her mouth to speak with a Brazilian accent, at which point they appear to visibly relax. She points to the subtlety of her experience stating, "it's a difference in the person's gaze" rather than an overt statement of prejudice.

At the same time that Bete focuses on subtle experiences, she does allude to the stigma associated with the identification of someone as Black. She reports that others advise her to call herself "chocolate" rather than "black" and touches on the way in which doing so would distance her from negative associations. When she asks them why call herself chocolate and not Black, she is told that what differentiates her from being black is the fact that her skin is "pretty" and that she does not have the same type of hair as African-Americans. Thus, there is a distinction between her "pretty" skin and the skin of a black person in their eyes. She also reveals some buy-in into the standards of beauty that are defined by lack of African features, by commenting on her nose as being a less than ideal feature.

Bete indicates that there are differences in the extent to which there is a cultural space, and an existing discourse, into which she fits. As opposed to Brazil, where she would be considered "morena," in the United States there is not a term that would capture her racial and ethnic identity. She is neither Black nor White, and the United States does not have a neat category in which to place someone who is in-between. She discusses her experience of attempting to define herself in such a context:

> I think of myself as morena, I don't know, I'm not black because my skin is not as dark as black, but I'm not white. So much so that I am in the process of citizenship and have to put race, and my husband said, you are not black, you have to put that you are white because it has no other option and race ... "He was explaining the reason that in my case, because I am Brazilian my race is white, because I'm not a descendent—I'm not African American, so I cannot be black and have no other option so I have to put white. But I'm not white, because I was not born white (laughs) and I'm also not black, I'm the interlude, so I think I am chocolate as they say (laughs) .... I'm a morena, so I'm a mix, I am neither one nor the other I'm the mixture, I am the interval between the two (laughs) (And it's different here versus in Brazil in this regard?) No, because in Brazil there is the white and the black too, there are whites, blacks with red hair, there are blondes with blue eyes, even the black is super, super dark. So yea there in Brazil there is also discrimination, it's racism yea? They say that there is not but it is only on paper that it does not exist, because in the day to day, the racism is there. But yea, in Brazil it's not so common ... the color difference is not so great because you have all shades, and

> here you have extremes, very white or very, very black, there is no "moreno," so for me at least, as much as you are fair-skinned, you have other characteristics that make you black, being black, the black race. And I do not have all of them, but I also don't have—I'm not white. (laughs) That's why I say I am neither one nor the other. But I say that I am black because I am not white so I say I'm black, I SAY I'm black, I actually am morena (laughs). My identity is morena. So, it is difficult to define, but I know what I am not for sure, laughs.

Bete shares that, in a social and political context in which the choices are binary, she feels she has no language to define herself. She describes her struggle throughout the passage, ultimately stating that it is easier to identify what she is not, than what she is. Bete also discusses the ways in which she makes the choice about how to name herself, which is at times determined less by how she actually defines herself and more by her non-whiteness. She begins the monologue by stating that as far as citizenship papers, she may have to identify as "white" due to her not being African-American. However, at the end, she states that the fact that she is not white automatically puts her in the category of being black, as far as the racial discourse in the United States. She emphasizes that she calls herself black not because she defines herself that way, but by virtue of not being white and not having the appropriate language with which to legitimately be in the in-between space.

On a deeper level, Bete demonstrates the power of defining someone's experience by languaging it. She struggles with the term to use for herself because in languaging her experience, she can claim it. She identifies with the term "chocolate" for this reason, because it recognizes that she is neither/nor, that she is set apart from the traditional binary structure in which there is black and white and nothing in between. She also demonstrates a desire to not be identified by only a part of her heritage, and suggests that a binary system in which there are only two options, and in which a mixture is not recognized but subsumed under the category of black, has inherent deficits that negate parts of her identity that she values. While Bete recognizes her non-whiteness, and suggests an irony to her putting "white" on the citizenship papers, she protests the binary

system in which non-white equals black, and wishes to claim her identity as being a mixture rather than agree with the dominant discourse in the United States where African ancestry automatically makes someone "black."

Bete recognizes the difficulty of self-definition in a context where she does not fit the categorization system that is in place. There is also a way in which perhaps identifying as black means giving up some of the racial privilege she would otherwise have.

Adriana has a different experience than Bete, in that she has relatively fair skin. However, like Bete, she reports experiencing first impressions that are challenged upon others hearing her speak. In contrast to Bete, who feels that her immigrant identity and profession mitigate the negative associations that some people seem to have upon seeing her skin color, Adriana describes the experience of feeling that the initial privilege of being viewed as light-skinned is removed when she begins to speak. Adriana shares with Bete the experience of being defined by others based on her appearance first, then her accent:

> look, to me I'm white, right… so... not that I appear American, but well ... like ... sometimes well, they still try to talk to me in English, then when I start talking, they see I do not speak fluently, then they start talking to me as though I were Mexican, then even my husband yells as me, because sometimes they speak Spanish with me, I don't make a good face, no, because they think everyone here is Mexican, there's only Mexicans, if you don't speak English, you're Mexican, if you're moreno, you're Mexican, right? Because they think that everyone who is moreno is Mexican. Then I told [my husband], 'you are a Mexican man,' I say to P--- right? (laughs) He is moreno, so then ... well ... I don't say that it's discrimination, but well, it's something that I feel, I feel like you know....

Adriana begins by stating that she identifies as white, and indicates that, at first glance, she does not appear quite American, but seems to fit in enough that others begin speaking to her in English. There appears to be an underlying association in her narrative

between whiteness and American identity. There is a way in which her light skin grants her access, if only for a moment, to claiming her space in the United States. And then, just as quickly, the moment is gone, and instead of being recognized for her Brazilian identity, she is confused with another immigrant group. She demonstrates annoyance at this confusion, and frustration that immigrant groups in her experience have been homogenized in the cultural discourse of the United States to the point where anyone who is "moreno" is considered Mexican, anyone who is "other" is considered Mexican. She has difficulty verbalizing her emotional experience, however, dangling an unfinished sentence, "It's something I feel, I feel like, you know…." She utilizes humor to mask her discomfort, teasing her husband for also being a "Mexican," and maybe more so than her as he is more "moreno" in comparison to her. In this passage, Adriana appears to be mourning. She seems to mourn not only her true identity, the identity not recognized by others as they confuse her with another immigrant group, but also the momentary (almost) White American identity, the privileged identity, that she has before opening her mouth to speak. She, like Bete, mourns the privilege of self-definition. Unlike Bete, she also mourns the privileges associated with being white, which would be a way to buy her a sense of belonging, if not for some of her other limitations like language proficiency and documentation status. She describes the ways in which she defines her racial identity and the reason for her not wishing to be associated with Mexicans:

> [I'm] white in the sense that—not white exactly, I mean I'm not morena, like well ... but they see that I am not American right... I think at first they even try to talk to me ... and when they see that I don't speak fluently or whatever they start to talk... in Spanish .... I think it's even a discrimination on my part, because Mexicans are not well seen here, right, so I guess that, well, and ... I feel like, kind of like, gosh they are confusing me with *Mexicans,* ah ... ah ... ah ... so I guess maybe it's a bit of pride.

Adriana defines her whiteness by her non-blackness and, on a more nuanced gradient, her being lighter than "morena." When she is assumed to speak Spanish or be "Mexican," she perhaps is lumped together not only with other immigrant groups, but racially speaking with "morenos." She acknowledges that she has some internalized prejudice toward Mexican immigrants because of the stigma associated with the group.

Adriana thus acknowledges a feeling of otherness, as well as resentment over the imposition of ethnic and racial identity onto her that she does not identify with. She acknowledges that part of her reaction is a reaction to inaccurate labeling by others, but that another part of her reaction has to do with her resistance to being associated with an group she perceives to be both marginalized and less educated than she, which she defines as having to do with "pride" and "a bit of discrimination on my part." She stutters during this part of the interview and appears embarrassed at her realization.

While Bete and Adriana discuss ways in which their racial and ethnic experiences were notable parts of their immigration narrative, most of the women in the sample did not have such a narrative. According to Cassandra, her experience with race and ethnicity in the United States has not been notable, and she emphasizes her belief in each person's capability for self-determination:

> I think it's normal, there is no difference, you know? So, I think that we as people put ourselves differently relative to other people, when for example: you go to perform a job, you don't execute it well; so you are putting yourself as inferior to that other person, or the task that was given you. So I believe that we put ourselves in positions, with our development, so I feel normal. There is no difference, and I see that in Brazil yes, we have that a lot, you know? Like, I went three years ago to Brazil, and I felt like, gosh I felt like a fish out of water, I felt totally out of place in my country. I even said to my sister, "Do I still speak Portuguese?" because I am feeling totally out of place…

According to Cassandra, her racial and ethnic experience has been "normal," and "no different" than in Brazil, and she denies the experience of having herself defined

from the outside. Instead, she believes in an individual's power to put themselves in a certain position by their behavior, and thus make themselves equal to or inferior to others. By this logic, then, it is up to the individual what position they hold relative to other people. She does not believe that her race or ethnicity has defined her and rather holds that she has been able to define herself.

What Cassandra does highlight relative to her positionality relative to others is the cultural alienation she feels, since being an immigrant here, from her own country. She does not feel that her racial or ethnic definition has changed, or she does not see that shift being as important as the shift she experienced in her identification with her own country. There is a way in which her immigrant experience here caused her to lose her identification with Brazil. She thus frames her experience in the United States as one which did not change her sense of herself in racial or ethnic terms, but did change her cultural identification and cause a shift in her sense of belonging with her home country. The image of being a fish out of water in one's own country is a powerful representation of where she considers her identification, not on racial or ethnic terms, but rather based on her nationality. And this identity has been challenged, as she created a life here.

Helena similarly, when asked about her transition to the United States in terms of her racial and ethnic experience, focuses on the cultural aspects of the shift instead:

> I think everything, yeah, everything, is different, right, it's another country, another cuisine, another everything, totally different, from the language, our ways, and—but it's nice that here there is a lot of culture, a lot of peoples, a lot of languages, a lot of everything ... Also you are not the only stranger in the nest, there are a bunch of people who are strangers too, yea? But I found everything different, but a different that was nice, I just, I still to this day I think my God I had a lot of difficulty with the language.

Rather than discussing her racial or ethnic identity, Helena focuses on her immigrant identity more generally, stating that everything is different but you are not "the

only stranger in the nest." In this sense, she links herself to other immigrants and immigrant groups symbolically, rather than focusing on her own otherness or her individual negotiation of her ethnic and racial identity. If you are one of many "others," you are no longer an "other" in the sense of being alienated or alone. There exists a sense of belonging in being in a country of many "others."

However, although she denies the importance of racial or ethnic identity in her immigration experience, Helena does acknowledge the difficulty she has, in this new social context, in integrating herself. In other parts of the interview, she reports that, while she and her family felt very welcomed in one church they belonged to which was filled with Americans, they never quite felt at home or fully integrated. At the end of the current passage, she discusses her difficulty with the English language.

Indeed, for many women in the sample, their cultural experience appeared much more salient than their racial or ethnic experiences, with many women avoiding the topic of race and ethnicity altogether. However, most discussed actively their experience of otherness and re-definition from a cultural perspective, and the ways in which adjusting to a new cultural context in the United States sometimes created difficulties in feeling at home in Brazil.

Diminished Sense of Self

In the context of undocumented status, women often described feeling a diminished sense of entitlement to the space they inhabited physically, and thus a sense of marginalization, but at times they also described a consequently diminished sense of self. This diminished sense of self was described in relation to how they saw themselves, as well as how they were seen by others. Adriana describes her experience of feeling like a "nobody" as an immigrant, because of her documentation status as well as her limited English proficiency.

> How can I tell you, in relation to this business of identity, I feel like an ignorant person, you know to be here, to be… to be here, like, not knowing many things, I think it may even be my fault… my children in school, for example, I think I should follow them more closely… I feel like an illiterate mother, I think it might be like this that the mother in Brazil feels who does not know how to read or write, she probably feels like… not so much, I mean, I read you know… I try to engage a bit in everything, especially since, if I didn't do that you know… it would be even sadder, but like, you know, I feel kind of like an illiterate American you know, like living in the United States, and it's as though I were someone without much education, without… not because I'm a housecleaner, nothing like that, but like, by me not accomplishing yet, I don't know if I will accomplish, I think… time will help like, for me to engage in things like I would like, like today I am still ashamed to volunteer at the school, sometimes I want to you know, I don't know with what time but…

Adriana reports feeling "ignorant" and "illiterate" as an immigrant and as a mother. The immigration experience has been one of loss for her, where not only has she encountered external barriers related to limited English skills and documentation status, but also these experiences have led to a personal sense of being regressed or stagnated, and a sense of foreshortened future as well in some ways. She has internalized the barriers and discusses a difficulty in trying to overcome them. She in fact limits herself, propelled by her shame to not volunteer or get as involved as she would like in her children's school. Her sense of being ineffective or inept in dealing in a new societal context, as well as her disappointment over not having achieved as much as she would like, make it difficult for her to envision growth and change toward her goals, in particular her professional goals and her goal of feeling at home in the United States. She discusses her sense of marginalization further, relative to her experience as a citizen in Brazil:

> I think like this, that in Brazil, I was Brazilian, I was, you know, somebody, and here and I feel like a—like nobody, a Maria nobody, like, an illiterate person…. Despite going after a lot, it's still not enough, but I would not want to be here twenty-five years and—and feel like this, what I have to do, I have to study, I

> think studying is one of the things that… that would help me too, to change this situation you know, but nowadays I don't see how to go very, I mean I don't see myself, like, evolving much, but for God nothing is impossible, gotta believe and fight...

Here Adriana highlights the importance of citizenship and societal recognition, and how the lack thereof can carry over not only into one's prospects for the future, but also one's sense of oneself, as being "somebody." She describes a wish to feel more at home in the United States over time, but laments the fact that even after twelve years in the United States, she still feels like an outsider. She sees education as a potential way out of this sense of alienation and diminished sense of self, but has trouble seeing a possibility for how this would be feasible for her. What makes Adriana's narrative so vivid is her clear articulation of the ways in external realities are experienced and given meaning, and then translated into shifts in one's perception of oneself. For her, her sense of otherness seems to have become a fog she moves through in her daily life, contaminating her wish to be a more involved mother or more professionally fulfilled.

Adriana also touches on the intergenerational impacts of the immigration experience, and the experience as a mother of inhabiting a different world than one's children. Whereas her children attend English classes and have been able to adapt, Adriana has difficulty participating in that world. Part of the diminished sense of self, besides the lack of documentation and lack of professional fulfillment, may be the sense of not being able to inhabit the world of one's children, and thus have a sense of alienation within the family structure. Finally, Adriana discusses the sense of having passed on this alienation to their children, even if they do not fully know it. She states "What is Brazil to them?" and discusses the fact that her children's lives are here, shortly thereafter saying, "It is and it isn't right? Because at any moment it might not be any more."

Mariana also describes an experience that suggests a diminished sense of self. Like Adriana, Mariana describes external barriers leading to an internalized narrative in which one is less than:

> Look, I think people here see us differently. We feel it. In the sense that we don't know how to speak their language, in the sense that, we are immigrants, that in reality this is not our place, I think that they think—I think that we think that we are nothing you know? Near them, I think this way, because we don't have value to them, we are always like, lower, yeah? We are lower and I think like this you know? It's a big difference and many things are very different.

Mariana describes a sense of being seen differently in American society both by virtue of being an immigrant and due to her lack of English skills. However, she appears to have internalized some of this sense of marginalization, in her second sentence, "We feel it," again later on when she says, "this is not our place," and later when she confesses that "near them," the Americans, she feels less than. Mariana on the one hand laments the otherness imposed on her by the perceptions she imagines or experiences being projected onto her, while on the other hand she demonstrates having internalized a sense of her own otherness. At another point in the interview she states,

> It's their place, the people who are documented and live here, you know? Here is not our place for people who are not documented, I think, right? I think so, right? Because if I am not documented, I can't drive, I can't do anything, I just have to work and think of going home, because there is no way to live here, to think of living for the rest of one's life… Those, well, who are documented, must live here peacefully. Because living the way we live here, is not good. It's not good, Luana, it's very difficult. Always we have our mind somewhere else, not that stilled mind, that can stay at peace, 'this is really my place.' I—I don't know, it's different you know? It's different, I think like this: here is my place in the sense that I have to work and acquire that which I'm wanting. Understand?

Mariana differentiates the immigrant who is documented from the immigrant who is not documented, as she makes the distinction of who has ownership of this space. This conceptualization is in contrast to the declaration made by Cassandra discussed previously, in that Cassandra chooses to not allow documentation or politics to define her sense of entitlement, while Mariana does not feel she has the option to appropriate her new cultural space. Because of the many legal barriers which limit her physical access to such things as a driver's license, she finds it difficult to envision a long-term arrangement in the United States, and lives her life as though she were a sojourner even though she has been here seven years.

This is her place, not in the sense of her having a sense of belonging, but in the sense of it being where she can get what she needs before going back to her true home. Part of the sense of internalized otherness experienced by Mariana is the psychological restlessness that she describes throughout her interview, a sense of consistent unease and inability to relax. She is living here, but her mind is there. Not only does this reflect a divided self, but it also reflects a deep sense of marginalization. Although she has lived in the United States for the past seven years, Mariana is unable to feel any sense of belonging. Her undocumented status, her connection to her daughters back home, her lack of English proficiency, and a sense of psychological unease, fear, and restlessness, all conspire for her to live outside of her own life. She is here, but she is not really here. Her lack of a sense of belonging transcends immigration paperwork or sideways glances from Americans on the street: it is a sense of foreignness that has penetrated her skin and her self. She no longer lives the life she had in Brazil, but she cannot allow herself to fully embody her life in the United States. She in fact reported moving many times over the past seven years, perhaps a physical manifestation of her psychological unease. The best she hopes for is to take what she can from the United States financially and return to Brazil, to an imagined future which feels like her real life, a life in the future in which she expects to rediscover a sense of belonging. Her statement about getting what she wants is an interesting one, because although she discusses financial aims throughout her

interview, her goals for immigration have become vaguely amorphous, and one has to wonder whether what she is wanting might not also include a psychological sense of ease, closure, and rest.

While Mariana discusses a belief that it is not possible to envision remaining in the United States permanently, she nevertheless has remained here for the past seven years, and continues to reside here with no intention of returning any time soon. She is able to experience a felt sense of belonging in a space that she has not inhabited in several years, while feeling deeply marginalized from a space in which she has existed in as much time. Mariana thus highlights the difference between inhabiting a space and appropriating it.

Shift in Social Status

> I think that you—you, we are all equal, regardless of color, regardless of anything, all of us here from the moment—I say it like this, that from the moment we crossed the border, that we crossed here, that we came here, nobody is better than anybody. The diploma you had in Brazil, it will not be worth anything if you do not go after a degree here. So yeah, with this I learned, I learned to value my life, I learned to value my work and see that with my work, whatever it is, the important thing is that it be—that it emerges with dignity. And because nobody is less than, less than or better than anybody by working at Dunkin Donuts. Nobody is better than anybody else because the person works in cleaning or because the person does anything else. So then, this process came with time and with experiences that I had.

Paula attributes her sense of dignity to the fact that she works honestly, as well as to her conceptualization of what it means to cross the border. She emphasizes that "from the moment we cross the border… no one is better than anyone." This sense of no one being better than anyone else seems to have two parallel meanings: on the one hand, you are not better or worse in that you are starting from a clean slate just like the other immigrants around you. On the other hand, she seems to be referring to a larger more

universal sense of being no better or worse than anyone period—that is, relative to people in general, employers, and Americans.

This passage is reminiscent of the one from Mariana earlier, who spoke of leaving behind her suitcases of clothing. Here, Paula touches on the abandonment of any academic or professional gains one has made (which most of the women in the sample did in fact, do, except for Bete who continued to be a nurse). Paula discusses the crossing of the border as the grand equalizer, and also recognizes that moment as one in which one's identity has to be re-examined and negotiated. Whatever status one had in Brazil is often discarded, and with it the stable sense of self in relation to one's world. Paula speaks of this shift in social status, of this sudden thrusting into uncertainty of self in relation to one's world, or shift of self in relation to one's world, as one that taught her where her true value lies. She discusses the difficult process of learning to find dignity in this context, and the ways in which her reference point has shifted:

> In Brazil the numerous times I went, I never liked to mention that I lived out of the country. Because everyone would ask: "ah what do you do?" And well, what you do here, you do not do there.... In terms of work for example, what I do today, I'm a housecleaner right? If it were in any other, in any former period of my life, I would not say that I worked in that, that I work with this. But not today, today for me it's different, today my conceptualization is this: that it does not matter what you do if it is with dignity. So, yea, in Brazil there is a lot of [focus on] status. I'll tell you an experience I had there that even I died laughing. I went [to Brazil], to have an operation, and the girl said to me: "what do you do?" And I said, "Oh I'm self-employed, I work for myself." The—a friend of my sister's who was with me, she said, "No you are a businesswoman," and I looked at her,"Okay, whatever, put on there what you want." So like, sometimes people look, they want to give you a label, when for you really it does not matter what it is you are, because you know what you are.... So today, as far as myself I know what I am. I am a divorced woman, hardworking and nothing more. Like, I know where I take, I know where I get. Which is from my job, right? Which is from my effort, it's from that. So, if it were a while ago I would be ashamed to say what I do. Not today. Today, I kind of, today I have pride in what I do, because it was with decent work that I raised my children, and that I could give, offer the best that

they have today. So, before my mind was different, but in that sense it changed a lot.

While in other parts of the interview, Paula discusses a sense of empowerment in working for the first time, a sense of fulfillment in doing so, and a lack of fear of working hard, here she discusses her conflict with her work relative to the meaning it would have in her home country. When she visited Brazil and was asked what she did here for a living, she was reluctant to reveal herself. The conflict indeed appears to be more about the perception that she imagines others might have of her ("In Brazil there is a lot of [focus on] status") than about her own experience of her work in the United States. As she began to associate her work, not with the possible perceptions of others, but with the results that it enabled her to accomplish, including raising her children, living with dignity, and providing adequately for her family, the meaning of her work changed, and she reports no longer feeling shame but pride in her housecleaning for these reasons.

Navigating Relationships

As women discussed their experience of immigration and their meaning making process, they discussed a shift and often a struggle in the navigation of interpersonal bonds.

Lack of Community Solidarity versus Individual Support

Women often discussed a big part of their immigration experience, particularly initially, as being one in which they depended on others. Indeed, much of the hardships experienced were linked to a sense of not having others to rely on or feeling a lack of community within their immigrant group. The women discussed a sense of alienation not only in terms of their interaction with a new cultural and geographic space, but also in their interaction with other immigrants in the Brazilian community. Whereas they had expected to be embraced or supported, they often found themselves disappointed or even

exploited. Rebeca discusses her view of the Brazilian immigrant community in terms of their relationship with others, relative to their relationship with their financial goals:

> It's few people who can organize ideas like, live life and have money or just work and earn money and send money to Brazil, it's few people who can balance it, it's few, the others seem to get, as though they were children, a bunch, in a candy store, they become desperate, don't know what flavor they will try. Then they begin to work here, work full time, part time, and get crazy, and if they also have the chance, when they're working with you, if they have the chance they take your shift and so it goes. And the person's personality starts changing, the person gets petty, more closed off, becomes a person that is more… everything to them is calculation, everything is added you know?

Rebeca discusses the disconnect between immigration goals and creating community, highlighting that many become blinded by the financial goals and in the process become miserly and greedy, taking advantage of others and not offering support. She frames the lack of community connection as related to a sense of desperation. Rather than establishing lives in the United States, she sees people focusing on adding and accumulating and planning for lives back in Brazil. This keeps them from making emotional roots in the United States as well as from interacting meaningfully with other immigrants. Many women discussed a sense that relationships among Brazilians in the United States could be antagonistic or competitive rather than supportive. Rebeca, in addition to offering her theory of barriers to connection in the community, discusses her own experience of feeling exploited and unsupported as a new immigrant:

> Then we began to live the life of America. In twenty-two days we were already living in a studio, we had nothing. We slept on the comforter, we had a comforter we had been given. We were given a comforter to sleep, to lie down, and a comforter to cover ourselves, it was winter. And time went by, we didn't know anything, people were charging us absurd amounts for—we called someone to go to the market with us, the person charged agent, let's say thirty dollars to go to the market. If we called someone to do something, the person charged us, we didn't

> have—we had no knowledge of anything, we depended on everyone right? So we see that there is a part of our community that sometimes exploit your—the good faith of people who are arriving.

At the very moment when she needed community support the most, Rebeca found herself being treated like a business transaction. No favor was free, and her need for assistance was taken advantage of as a way for others to make money. She states "And the person here, who depends on another person, especially with housing, food or something like that, even if you have the money to pay, but you do not know how to go there to buy, when you arrive here, you subject yourself to a lot." Like many of the other women who were interviewed, Rebeca found that many of her difficulties as a new immigrant were compounded by the experienced lack of camaraderie within the Brazilian community.

Sometimes, women described their sense of alienation and disappointment with the Brazilian community as affecting them more than any discomfort they have interacting with Americans. Over and over in her interview, Kelsi touches on the loneliness of the immigrant experience and her alienation not only from her faraway daughter, but also from the Brazilian community itself. She denies that she has encountered any kind of racial prejudice from Americans during her time as an immigrant, but says that she has experienced mistreatment and humiliation from other Brazilians. She states, "Brazilians rise a little bit and they want to step [on you]." While she feels the fear of deportation as an encounter with the United States on a systemic level, she does not seem to feel the same dread on a personal level toward American citizens. She in fact states that she feels more comfortable attempting to speak in her limited English with Americans than when there are Brazilian immigrants around to hear her, as she has had experiences of being made fun of and corrected. Kelsi acknowledges that she believes racism exists in the United States, but states that she has never personally experienced it, whereas the incidents of mistreatment over her being a newer

or more disadvantaged immigrant relative to other Brazilians stands at the forefront of her mind. She makes a wry joke about how "you work like a slave anyway," but it is the Brazilian boss who is the issue, not the American customer, in her experience. She describes one difficult experience in the passage below.

> Then I, my colleague and my boss went to clean a house. And she just left us there and was going to pick us up and take the three of us to the movies. And then was when it came out like, me wanting to talk impressively, wanting to say 'bye boys' I said 'bye girls.' Oh girl, but that woman laughed. Then I said: Now I don't open my mouth anymore. (How did you feel?) Ah, at the time you laugh, at the time we laugh, you think it's funny. Later you stop to think, it's very humiliating, you not knowing how to speak. This language is difficult….I think that with English here, at least talking, it would be, there wouldn't be a need to study. You wouldn't be so dependent on Brazilians, because you work cleaning houses. If I knew English I would have my own houses. Because so many people already asked, you don't know how to respond, how will you respond, there's no way.

Kelsi discusses the way in which her lack of English proficiency has become a barrier not only to her being able to communicate within larger society, but also a way for her to be taken advantage of by other Brazilians and to depend on them to an uncomfortable degree. Her dependence on others is humiliating, and the ways in which her Brazilian boss utilizes her authority is a reason why Kelsi feels that it is much easier to deal with Americans in American society than it is at times to deal with Brazilians.

Not all interactions within the Brazilian community were negative. When women described positive experiences, these experiences were examples of situations in which they felt camaraderie and belonging. Women described their church communities as support systems at times, as well as individual relationships that were meaningful. However, women generally described lacking a sense of true community and camaraderie, while at the same time valuing individual relationships that were meaningful to them.

For Mariana, the challenge to having a community stems from practical issues. For her, the difficulty in establishing a true sense of community has been the fact that she is surrounded by people who are living like her, working extended shifts and having little free time:

> No, there's no leisure, no friendship, it's like that you know? There's no way to go out with anyone, with a friend to chat with friends, there's not much time at all, and sometimes we arrive at night from work and the other one is leaving for work. And our life is like that. Very little—there is no leisure, you don't go out and you barely have friendship in this place, you almost don't have it… I think like this, friendship to go out, to chat, to distract one's mind, there isn't, because most of the people who are here too Luana, of the friends that we have when they are not working during the day they are working at night, when you are arriving, they are leaving. You understand? So it's hard, really life here not just for me but for everybody is difficult, there is not much and it gets very complicated.

Mariana highlights the fact that leisure time is a luxury, especially for women who are working to reunite with loved ones in Brazil. Although these women might spend several years or even an indefinite amount of time in the United States, the fact that they are committed to investing in Brazil and planning for a life there may keep them from investing fully in community here, may keep them isolated and make it even more difficult to focus on self-care.

At the same time that women described a general sense of being solitary in their endeavors, they also emphasized their need for assistance, particularly as early immigrants. Women discussed interpersonal bonds as critical in their ability to move forward and create a life in the United States. For some of the women, those bonds were transactional in nature, such as the relationships Rebeca described above in which other immigrants provided assistance on a fee-for-service basis. However, some women discussed important relationships that helped them succeed on a more personal level. Paula, for example, discussed close friends who helped her to practice her English and

learn to save her money, as well as who encouraged her to start her own cleaning business. In the following passage, she discusses the way in which one American boss helped her:

> I experienced many [difficulties] here and you start maturing, you start growing here, here, you meet many people, but many fake people. And I don't know if it's because I never had much life experience in Brazil and when I came here, yea, I came across a lot of good, but also very bad people. I had great friends, I have great friends that to this day I am in contact with them, who were people who helped me a lot. I have a friend, C---, he—I worked with this guy, he would give me a half hour lunch and he would say to me: "Paula, you will read to me for 15 minutes," and I would say, "C--, I won't, why would I read to you? I don't know," and he said, "One day you will understand, I will give you half an hour but 15 [minutes] you have to read to me." So I would read to him, he would correct me, and only later did I understand why he had done that for me, to help me. Because like, today, I can read, today I understand, I went to school for a very short time here, but I take care of myself somehow.

For Paula, key figures in her life enriched and shaped her immigration experience, allowing her to learn skills and thrive in a way she believes she never would have, had it not been for the support of these individuals. They also brought light to an experience that was filled with difficulty. In the case of her boss C--, his support allowed her to learn English and feel confident in her ability to communicate. Paula describes the immigration experience as one that leads to personal growth and learning, and describes the way in which her lack of life experience, and her naiveté, gave way to both disappointments and positive relationships. Because of the important individual relationships she found, she was able to persevere and succeed on multiple levels, including her professional life and her ability to take care of herself.

For Helena, her connection to various churches over the course of her immigration experience provided her a sense of community and support, as well as job opportunities. Whereas women in general described the immigration experience as

lonely and often paved with disappointments within the community, several described church communities as important sources of support and interpersonal connection. In Helena's case, she was heavily involved in church community in Brazil, and upon arrival became involved with a branch of the same church in Florida:

> When we arrived at the church, yes we managed to find the church that was us. When we arrived, they welcomed us and whatnot, and put us to lead the youth [group] and at that point we had not been consecrated pastors yet, but we always like, it's serving the Lord you know?

For Helena, her church experiences served as her major source of social and spiritual support. She describes a consistent involvement in church life, and appears to define herself by her involvement in these communities. She describes the experience of attending an American church later, in Chicago, after moving from their initial home in Cape Coral, Florida.

> Brazilians are so warm, we talk so much, and whatnot. You know, it seems, I had the impression that the service ends, everyone goes home, you know? And us, used to Brazilian churches—Brazilian churches are like this: the service ends, you don't ever go home, you want to talk, you want to talk. You know? There is always something, there is always whatever. And like, I don't know... it's the culture really, I don't know what it was exactly, because like: the music was marvelous, the preaching was very so-so, very so-so, you know?... I don't know, the folks are good folks, I really don't know why we were not able to adapt, I don't know, and the Brazilian church [was] very far away. Gosh it was over an hour, there was no way. In Cape Coral also, going back a little to when we lived there, we lived three years in Cape Coral. At first we did the service, we went every weekend, we lived three hours from our church. We went. And this, we never got one cent from the church, never. And we went because we loved everyone already, the people, you know? It was—imagine, it was seven years in the same place, so like, it was great, friends from our ministry, that from there we went to the seminary together and today many of them are pastors in Florida too, so like, it was, it was a lot of time together. We then moved three hours from there, but we couldn't cut that cord, no way.

For Helena, her Brazilian church community is an anchor and a support system, a link to her culture and a way to feel a sense of belonging. Although she was heavily involved with the American church while she was there, and according to her welcomed and well loved, she nevertheless missed the cultural and emotional experience of being in a Brazilian church. Her community was so important to her and her family that they drove several hours every Sunday to be a part of their church family.

Gender Roles

Several women described the immigration experience as one that allowed them greater freedom as women. Cassandra describes the way in which she perceives her marriage to have been affected:

> I think that in coming to the USA, our Brazilian husbands improve, because today in Brazil things have changed a lot, but my husband in Brazil, he did not do anything domestic. The first day I asked him to sweep a house for me, he was sweeping, the gate made noise, he looked, it was his mother, he threw the broom under the bed afraid of his mother ... sweeping ... this is our culture ... chauvinistic! Men don't… you know? Today my husband cooks, today my husband cleans the house, he organizes, he's the one who washes his clothes, I don't wash it anymore, you know? In Brazil- I always talk to my sister, my sister does the whole family's laundry… I told her: "No, here I don't do it anymore! That's over! You know? My money is mine, I control it, if it was in Brazil, he would control everything ... you know? So well, I think this transition, improves a lot, it improves a lot, because the husbands... are much more companions. And also the question of ... being close to the family, because man, and especially us… women, we have trouble with men, in relation to their mothers, because with them being close to their mothers, they're there... like I told you: he was sweeping the house, his mother showed up, he threw the broom far, afraid of his mother seeing that he was sweeping the house for me. Yea? So yea, we bring them far away and it is easier for us to tame them. (Laughter)

According to Cassandra, her husband has "improved" in the sense that he has become more willing to help with domestic tasks, and by being far from his mother he is easier "to tame." In essence, Cassandra celebrates the transformative impact of the immigration experience on Brazilian husbands generally and hers in particular. She also contrasts her experience to that of her sister, who is still in Brazil and continues to maintain traditional gender roles when it comes to her role in domesticity. Cassandra also touches on the financial aspect of the liberation she feels as a woman in the United States, reporting that were they to have stayed in Brazil, she would be handing over her paycheck to her husband. Cassandra indicates that the cultural climate of the United States, combined with the fact that family is often distant and thus less able to meddle or impose cultural norms, together allow for a wife to mold her husband into ways that are helpful and preferable to her.

Cassandra also indicates that, in addition to a woman having greater power and access to "tame" her man, the husband also softens in the experience of immigration and becomes more of a "companion." Whereas her husband used to help somewhat, in private, when they lived in Brazil, he now helps publicly and does not face any kind of social sanctions. It also is possible that the experience of facing immigration struggles together helps a couple to feel closer to each other and in that way promote companionship. Distance from one's family and extended support network, coupled with facing struggles together, appear to serve as factors that can strengthen the bond between a couple. Adriana, below, describes the experience of not only growing together with her husband due to maturity and time, but also due to the immigration experience:

> In living here we became one dependent on the other right, because here we have one another and our family because we don't have more family right, close by, father, mother and whatnot, and I also think that maturity makes us become closer.

Adriana also agrees with Cassandra that her husband has become more helpful with domestic tasks since migration, and cites her own lack of availability and work schedule as contributing to this shift. It may be that in the absence of a paid housekeeper, and in the presence of a wife who is working for the first time or whose income is suddenly crucial to the family income, the husband adjusts his role in order to help with household labor. The women's paid labor, then, becomes a way out of their traditional gender roles both by showing them alternative ways of defining themselves, and by forcing their partners to help chip in in order for things to get done.

Helena, unlike Cassandra, discusses her attempt to be a "submissive" wife as dictated by the church, but at the same time recognizes that perhaps she feels comfortable with the role more so that women in the community who have sought outside employment.

> Yea, the Brazilian woman in general is a strong woman, she is a woman warrior. So I see—this was not my experience, and now that I think of it, since I didn't arrive and go straight to work, it may be that I didn't have the problem that many people had which was that the woman earns more than the man and suddenly the woman is the man of the house, because she earns more, you know? Here is a place where since I counseled many couples, I saw how the woman earned a lot, that the man sometimes leaned on the woman, you know? So well, it was a lot of people I saw this happen to. And since I never did this, working a lot and earning a lot, I think that financially—also I think that he always earned, we never had a problem with that—and well, I don't think there is a difference for the immigrant woman. I don't know—for me it's not—for me, for me there wasn't. I think that a Christian woman, who knows the word of God when she is in submission ot a man who is full of the Holy Spirit—and I joke a lot with my husband like, if here were not a man full of the Holy Spirit, nobody could stand it!

Helena points to two important issues. One is that shifts in gender roles do not happen automatically or independently, and can be affected by multiple factors including not only the woman being in the labor force, but also other factors such as religious teachings on the subject. The second is that her lack of prioritizing the work force has

perhaps prevented her from expecting or experiencing gender role shifts in the home. None of the women in my sample explicitly discussed marital conflicts linked to the wife becoming a primary wage earner. However, a couple of women did describe the immigration experience as liberating from some traditional role expectations. Paula, for example, explicitly cited the opportunity for greater freedom as a woman in her decision to come to the United States. For Kelsi, immigrating here and earning her own money allows her to support her daughter without the help of her daughter's father, who spent his time in the United States when he came before her as an increasingly absent partner and father, ultimately being unfaithful to her. Mariana also had the experience of a partner who came to the United States first, who she describes as drinking away much of his money and becoming the subject of gossip in their hometown due to his inability to pay his debt. She waited to come to the United States to break of their relationship of many years partly because she expected to bear some stigma if she did so in Brazil.

Women described the immigration experience as liberating in some ways and discussed greater financial freedom as well as overall autonomy. However, they also described some role strain. While women generally described hard work as a key component of their experiences, a couple of women explicitly discussed the experience of *always* working, whether inside or outside of the home, during their paid labor or their leisure time. For example, Bete discusses her perspective of a man versus a woman planning to go to sleep:

> But being a woman is very complicated and is very busy. You are always embodying a different role, it's not that—sometimes I say the man gets home, says I will go to bed, then he goes into the room, lies down and sleeps. The woman says I will go to bed, then she walks by, takes the clothes that are on the sofa, grabs the children's shoes and takes them to the room, sees if tomorrow's food is ready, goes to the bathroom to see if something is dirty, cleans it, showers, then goes to sleep. So between the moment she says she will go to bed and the time she actually goes to sleep, about two hours pass… that's what happens at my house. So my husband says, I'm going to bed, then goes to bed and sleeps. (laughs)

Bete highlights in the above passage the difficulties of simultaneously and conflictually embodying multiple roles, and the experience of that being a particularly female experience. While women report at times finding some greater freedoms in their gender role expression, they do so often in addition to roles they already carried. While Bete works several 13-hour shifts a week as a nurse and during our interview self-proclaimed as "primary breadwinner" of her home, she nevertheless describes an experience of not truly resting, not allowing herself to, or perhaps not feeling the freedom to, shed her roles and be in her own skin, late in the evening to allow herself rest.

There is a sense in which, regardless of the extent to which women were comfortable with traditional gender roles, or to which they attempted to defy them, they nevertheless experienced a consistent sense of needing to fill multiple roles and in a sense, be everything to everyone. Women described being pulled in many directions, partly because of their experiences of immigrating and the psychological negotiation of their identities that that entailed, but partly due to the fact of being women. For many women, being a mother was a big part of this sense of responsibility.

Negotiating Relationships With Children

Many of the women described a gap between themselves and their children in terms of their children's experiences. For women who left children behind in their home country, this gap represents a loss in terms of their relational bond, and is tied to a deep mourning and fear of complete alienation within the relationship. For women who are raising families here, they often shared an awareness of the fact that they and their children inhabit different worlds, with their children also being associated with two cultural worlds but perhaps having less awareness of that fact given that the only life they know is often the United States. In both situations, there is a sense that women are faced with negotiating a barrier between themselves and their children, with the negotiation being a complex and dynamic process.

Paula describes a particular situation in which the division between herself and her son appeared unexpectedly and came to a head:

> There was a day that … I did not speak correctly, then he turned to me and said, "Mom you have to go back to school, because with your English ... ", and I said:" look, with my English, I support you, you have the best at home, I pay everything for you, I'm not ashamed….” For me it was good because that day I was able to show him that what is important is dignity, not exactly what you do or what you don’t do. For example, I work with cleaning, and probably for him at the time it would be shameful, though today he does not see it that way anymore, because then he said to me: "Oh mother, but you need to go back to school so you can do something else." [I said] "son I do not need to do anything else, because with what I do I live well, I give you the best, and I think I'm very, I'm not ashamed of what I do. Now if you are ashamed by what I do, that’s your problem. I am not ashamed. "And another thing, that day coincidentally I had to take him to cut his hair, and he cuts hair with a Brazilian, but he does not speak Portuguese well, he doesn’t—he speaks Portuguese, but he couldn’t explain to her how he wanted his hair. So, every time he goes to get his haircut I go with him to explain to the girl how he wants his hair .... And that day I picked him up at school and I went to take him to get a haircut. Then we had this disagreement in the car with him saying those things to me about me needing to go back to school to do something better, more worthy with my life. Then I said to him, I did not need that .... So, I went to take him to the haircut, but I was so upset with what he said to me, that when we got to the door... of the salon, I gave him the money, and he said, "you’re not going in?" And I said, "no, you’re on your own! Because my English supports you, and with your Portuguese you can not even get a haircut." Understand? So you learn what is important, what is important is that it does not matter what you do, as long as your work is, you're not doing anything that is not God's will or that is perverse. So like, since that day he never said anything to me anymore. I said: "look, me with my English, I clean, I do what I have to do, and funny, you with your Portuguese you cannot cut your hair."

Paula points to the ways in which her experience in the United States is viewed by the lens of her teenaged son, for whom she hopes her experiences will be a jumping off point for his own academic and professional success, but who did not show awareness of the dignity of her labor. She points to the importance of having a sense of dignity herself,

so that his comment did not define her. Indeed, she reports that she used and appreciated the experience as an opportunity to teach her son about how she defines herself, and consequently to challenge him to respect her choices and her position as well. This passage is poignant in that it illustrates a clash of two different narratives about the same physical reality, with her and her son attributing significantly different meanings to Paula's position within the United States, and shows the way in which Paula reclaims her ability to define herself and take ownership and pride in her narrative.

According to her son, Paula's imperfect English and her housecleaning meant that she needed to work toward bettering herself. Unlike her, he is an American-born citizen whose whole life has been established in the United States. Paula was not only a foreigner to the United States, but also to her own son. Her story illustrates a poignant generational gap in experiences that also becomes a symbolic barrier in her relationship with her son. According to Paula, her response to her son's comment was to point out the many benefits of her honest labor, including his education and being financially provided for. She indicates her surprise at his statement and the depth of her offense when she reports that her reaction was not only to respond verbally, but also to refuse to help him with a task he had taken for granted she would perform, which is to help him explain to a Brazilian hairdresser how to cut his hair. Paula appears to enjoy the irony in the situation, where her dignity is called into question due to difficulties in another culture, while her son himself cannot get his hair cut by a Brazilian woman. What undercuts her son's assumption about the meaning of her labor and language skills is the fact that he would have the exact same limitations, were he placed in a different cultural context himself. In effect, Paula chooses to give him a dose of his own medicine by allowing him to know what it feels like to have to struggle through an awkward interpersonal interaction with inadequate language skills. Rather than tell him, she shows him, and appears to take amusement in his discomfort. Paula's son responds to her unexpected intervention by never bringing up the subject in that way again. She states that he would never make such a comment today.

Paula's story is not only poignant on an individual level, but symbolically in a more general sense for all of the women, who find themselves forced to negotiate core aspects of their identity by being in a new cultural context. Paula produces, in her short vignette, a counter-argument to the implication that one's employment or language skills have anything more to do with them personally than they do with the environment they are placed in. In effect, she points to the universality of her experience and lessens her role as "other" by demonstrating that her son can be an "other," and in effect, so can anyone when removed from their comfort zone. Like Cassandra, who challenges the narrative that documentation status establishes one's sense of legitimacy and belonging, Paula challenges the assumption that less skilled labor means less dignity, or that halting language skills indicate anything less about oneself as a person. Both make meaning out of their experiences in ways that challenge dominant discourses and thus define themselves rather than allowing themselves to be defined by others.

For Rebeca, who left her two daughters in Brazil and then reunited with them years later, the negotiation of her relationship with her children was also a complex one. Rose reports that one of the indications of the emotional and psychological lack of connection between herself and her daughters during their late childhood is that she was not aware of how much they had grown. She reports that upon arriving to Brazil, five years after seeing them last and seven years after journeying to the United States, she brought them Barbie dolls and children's clothes:

> When I went back to see my daughters, they already were in pre-adolescence, so much so that I took children's clothes for my daughters, I took Barbie dolls to my daughters. I arrived there, each one a young lady, growing up. And I was like: Oh, okay, uh huh. I hid the dolls, pretended I wasn't seeing anything, because in my head, my daughters had not grown, because time goes by so fast, you work so much here that the time passes so fast, that I bought Barbie dolls for my daughters, bought children's clothes for my daughters, I knew the dress size but I bought this way because I had not seen my daughters grow. I arrived there, they were young women, dating, in High School, and I said, Oh, okay. And never again is it the same, as much as they respect you, love you and all, you lose the

> bond. The bond of a—of parents with children who are far away, is lost. If someone says otherwise, they are lying…. The only person that I recognized was my father and my mother. I did not recognize anyone else, my nieces, my daughters.

Rebeca comments on the crucial bond that is lost between parent and child due to extended absence. She admits that she utilized denial as a coping strategy to an extent, stating that she knew their dress sizes but had not seen them grow, and brought back children's clothing that would not fit. Rebeca also discusses the lived experience of time as an immigrant, almost as though it were a time warp, with her feeling as though her children have grown up more quickly than they should, with time being different for her while she worked in the United States.

Rebeca is currently reunited with her children, who after a long wait in Brazil obtained documentation and are living with her. She discusses the lingering effects of their prolonged absence from one another, and the loss that she feels as a mother, uncertain about how to treat them and afraid to lose them completely.

> And then you lose yourself completely, as a mother, like, you let your family leave completely, each one leaves from a window, it's difficult to manage at times, you don't want to hurt one, don't want to hurt the other, don't want to upset one, don't want to upset the other, don't want to say something, but have to say that thing, have to decide that thing, but don't know how to decide that thing, because… yea… you're going to become afraid they won't return, because you say: they already went so long without me, that they've gotten used to living without me.

Rebeca echoes Kelsi's concern about losing her daughter forever, should Kelsi wait too long to return, indicating that Rebeca too has the same fear, and that in her case, she is afraid that the fear has been realized. She feels that she did indeed leave for too long and that the loss is irrevocable. She lives life with her daughters

trepidaciously, cautious not to say the wrong thing but still wishing to be their mother, because she lacks the security in the relationship that may otherwise be taken for granted. Rebeca describes powerfully the idea of letting one's family leave, each through one window, as a metaphor for the divisive experience of immigrating without the entire family. The process of reuniting is not just one of joy and communion, but one of trying to put back together something which has been fragmented, of rediscovering boundaries, limits, and each other.

Coping Strategies

This is the land where children cry and parents don't see. (Paula)

While women consistently described struggles associated with the immigration experience, they also demonstrated a fair amount of resiliency and demonstrated various coping skills that they utilized in the face of multiple life stressors including physical labor, disillusionment, and homesickness. Their narratives themselves exemplify a coping strategy, a process of meaning making through which women attempt to create a coherent whole out of their experience. Below are a couple of key coping strategies that arose throughout the interviews.

Defining Dignity

One way that women discussed coming to terms with the struggles of their immigration experiences was to find dignity in their experiences. They discussed the process of meaning making that allowed them to at times redefine a sense of dignity. Bete discusses an experience of being talked down to by a patient and the ways in which she dealt with the situation:

> I once had a patient who was disoriented, he said there was no reason for me to have come here, because he noticed my accent. He said: "What are you doing in my country? You did not have to come here." So, I noticed that it was discrimination because he was disoriented, the fact that he was disoriented his ego was not working to control the words he was saying, so that really was what he thought. It was the only time I noticed discrimination, but at other times at least the patients were respecting those who had the needle in their hand (laughs) ... I was very upset and did not like the fact of being discriminated against. Because I had come here, due to the need of the country, they went there to invite me, it was even something I told him, I said: "I did not came here because I wanted to, you went there to invite me, you need me." It was something I said to him, but he was really disoriented, he did not understand, but okay. I felt very bad, very bad, very upset, I didn't want to go into work the next day, I was really very upset, but since I needed to work because with no work there is no money... But unfortunately this happened, and I asked to not care for him anymore, because I did not want to care for him if he did not like me because he was not disoriented all the time.

Bete describes experiencing one instance of prejudice during her time in the United States. She emphasizes the fact that it was a patient who was disoriented, and notes that because his ego strength was low, he said what was really on his mind. Her narrative suggests a belief that perhaps other people have felt similarly but had the ability to censor themselves. She discusses other patients perhaps feeling similarly but "respecting who has the needle in their hand," suggesting that she feels a sense of power, as a nurse, and thus identifies herself as someone who commands respect by the role she performs.

Bete also discusses several times during her interview the fact that she was invited to come to the United States, and her response to the patient who expressed prejudice toward her was to emphasize the fact that she came because the United States needed her services. She was thus able to bring to mind her work skills as a way to shore herself up and build on internal resources for buffering herself from negative experiences. Her work skills do not just provide her with a living, but with a tangible sense of worth not only to herself and her family financially, but to the country she immigrated to. Her profile is thus unique from other participants, whose immigration experiences were

largely determined by their needs and desires and those of their families, but not based on being recruited and invited by the host country. Bete's employment allows her a narrative in which her 'otherness' as an immigrant is lessened by the fact that she is a welcome, indeed, needed resident here.

The idea of commanding respect and finding purpose through one's role was not unique to this participant, and when women felt that they were performing a necessary duty or that others depended on them, these experiences allowed them to feel a sense of dignity and deal with possible adjustments in social status. Cassandra, for example, who went from being a bank manager in her home country to being a nanny in the United States, discusses the extent to which the families she works for depend on her, and the extent to which she finds meaning and fulfillment in their dependence and trust toward her, as well as the meaningful interpersonal connections she forms with parents.

Other women described finding meaning in helping others personally, when their work lives did not offer them the satisfaction described above. Women named family members they were helping in Brazil as giving their time in the United States purpose and fulfillment. Women also described helping recent immigrants and the importance they ascribed to helping others, as a way to cope with their own disappointments with the Brazilian community.

Working to escape pain

In several interviews, the subject of work came up as a way to keep women from ruminating on their longing for loved ones back home, or to keep from experiencing painful feelings generally. Rebeca discussesd a progression of her relationship to her work over the course of her immigration process. Below, she discusses her reaction to realizing that, at the end of the one-year mark, which was their original deadline for returning to Brazil, she had not realized her desired financial goals:

> It was frustrating. I felt helpless, to tell you the truth. I don't know, I felt that way. I said: I didn't make it? Gosh, what did I do, goodness! Because I did everything

> right, why didn't I make it, then I started to do a review of why I had not made it. I said: maybe because I demanded too much, and also it was a lot of money—let's suppose it was something that involved money— 'well obviously right? It's crazy that in six months I would get all this money! No you wouldn't, right Rebeca?' I would ask myself. 'No, but I had to have made it, I don't have kids here, don't have anyone, I had to have made it.' And I would begin to, uh, punish myself, like it was a punishment, like, because I did not accomplish that, it's a punishment, you get angry, I kept asking myself, 'Why didn't I make it? So-and-so made it and I didn't, what did I do wrong? Where did it go wrong?' So it was a lot of questions at stake, I asked a lot and demanded a lot of myself. So it got to a certain point that I said, 'No, it's not like that, life is not like that, that's not a life.' No, it's not, and when I got whatever it was I wanted, to me it was normal, I would say, gosh, nothing's changed. I don't know if it's because my daughters were in Brazil too, my family, I tried to fulfill myself somehow? I don't know, maybe I tried to fill the void that I felt for being far from my family, somehow I always fit something in there for me to not have to think about something. Today I see that it was for me to not think so much, yea? So, I filled those hours, I said, let's work, work, work. The day that I was working I was not thinking about anything. While you're working the world's spinning. The day that I had off at home I went into despair, truthfully I never had a day off because always my day off was when they would call me to come in and I went too.

Rebeca describes the psychological struggle behind her realization that her dream for her immigration experience would not be realized the way she had expected. Even while the prospect of financial opportunity and upward mobility is tantalizingly tempting, there is a sense of helplessness that is expressed by women in the current study as they realized that their hard work was not paying off at the speed that they had hoped, or that the cost is very high. Just as Mariana describes the experience of sacrificing one's social life due the intense work schedules of Brazilian immigrants, Rebeca describes the experience of sacrificing one's sense of ease and ability to live in the moment due a rigid attachment to initial or mythical immigration goals. Work is not only the means of obtaining goals, but also the means of easing psychological distress by distracting oneself from emotional pain, disillusionment, or longing for loved ones afar.

Once Rebecca realized the goal would not be realized, that she was losing out on living her life because she was focused on making a life, and once the fatigue of her

lifestyle psychologically caught up with her, Rebecca decided (or submitted to the need) to relax and begin to actually live in the present. Rebeca thus describes a progression in her relationship to work and her immigration goals, ultimately choosing her emotional well-being and an acceptance of reality, over a mythical goal tended to by being a person of two minds. The cost of accepting this reality, however, is her dream of returning 'home.'

Importance of Faith

Women discussed faith as a key aspect of their lives which served as a source of guidance, inspiration, strength and resiliency. Women often described their decision to come to the United States as informed or confirmed by prayer, and their faith in God as serving them well in times of trials and stress.

Cassandra reports experiencing the process of her family obtaining visas as a "miracle," and thanking God internally as each of her family members was granted their visa in turn. She also discusses the importance of prayer in her experience as an immigrant and her belief that God has shaped her experiences. In the passage below, Cassandra discusses her experience of trying to get her children into an English classroom when they first immigrated:

> When we arrived here, I took the children to take the school test—a normal school that was not bilingual, a school really for Americans, and my children went to take the test, and everything, in prayer really, because all my life I always feared God, had faith… I don't mean that I have a lot of faith, because my faith is still quite small, you know? But I have faith in God, and everything that I do I really put in His hands. And then the children went to take the tests and me praying, praying, Lord, Lord, bless it Lord, bless it, you know? Put the words in their mouths, and whatnot… and then when they left the interview with the director, the director said, They are qualified to enter.

Helena, like Cassandra, describes her life as being lived in prayer. She describes her decision to immigrate with her husband into the United States as having been "very prayed over, very thought through, and one of the things that we put before God was the visa you know? We put it before him very much, that should it be against his will, for the visa not to be approved and we would look at other alternatives." Helena describes the visas as confirmations of God's will for them to immigrate, thus giving them confidence in their decision.

Women also described God's role in helping them cope with difficult circumstances and help them persevere. Luisa describes her experiences in the passage below, including her experience going to court regarding issues related to her daughter and her daughter's father, from whom Luisa has a history of abuse.

> In all the circumstances of my life God was very present. There's a little story that we hear since childhood in Brazil, and I think here it probably exists: when a person walks with God all the time, and at a given time the person complains, why in the sand are there only two steps, because God carries. I feel that way, I think that God spent a lifetime walking with me and since a while ago he carries me, because alone I won't go. You know? In fact, I sometimes went to court and I don't have the English to—I don't have it—and when you get nervous it's like something… right? And I prayed and I asked God very much and I asked that the angels speak what I could not say because I was not lying. And I spoke with the judge as though I spoke fluent English. You know? And so, that was not me, and I believe in the power of God.

Luisa describes God's presence as a constant in her life, as a source of strength and as a way to not feel alone. Particularly in the context of immigration, where women consistently described feeling isolated and lonely not only in society at large but also within their own community, the sense that a higher power is in contact, ever watchful and guarding, was indicated to be a powerful source of comfort—at times the only comfort. Women also described faith as a source of resiliency, a way to feel ownership

over their lives and dignity in their circumstances in spite of social or documentation constraints.

Concluding Remarks

For the women in my sample, there appeared to be a common progression in their experiences. They usually arrived in the United States with a point of contact, followed by some initial difficulty as early immigrants. From this initial stage, they experienced an attachment to the United States, with different participants indicating different reasons for this attachment. Many participants in fact reported no desire to leave, while others continue nonetheless hoping to leave the United States, often to reunite with loved ones, eventually; but both groups demonstrate an attachment to the United States and a sense of having "one foot in each country," as Mariana put it. In reality, the idea of "one foot in each country," while it captures the ambivalence of the immigrant experience, does not capture the internal struggle and dynamic negotiation that occurs upon knowing two cultural worlds.

In negotiating the conflict between their early expectations and their actual realities, the women described a process of renegotiation of identity and striving for a sense of dignity. Finally, another common aspect of the progression of the women's immigrant experience appeared to be a sort of cultural rootlessness, which involved an alienation not only from one's family in Brazil, but also from American culture, and even from one's own immediate family including one's children. This alienation may be counteracted by an intentional and consistent involvement in community, but across my interviews I discovered that many of these women nevertheless felt a sense of isolation in one form or another.

Across the interviews, women expressed the complex nature of their immigration experiences and the ways in which the experience challenged their very sense of themselves. For several of the women, the shifting reality that led to a more permanent arrangement in the United States caused a deep crisis of identity in which they had to re-

evaluate their goals and themselves, and either live with regret and longing or discover a newfound meaning and sense of purpose in their lives, often linked with hopes for the future of their children. The immigration experience forced them to re-examine how they define dignity, and what gives them purpose. Most often, women described experiencing a bittersweet combination of dispelled expectations, appreciation for newfound opportunities, and a process of making sense out of their experiences. One notable aspect of the participants' experiences that was elucidated in their narratives was their resiliency. Even women who reported feeling duped or disillusioned, or isolated in their immigration narratives, discussed powerful coping strategies including finding dignity, turning to their faith, and appropriating their experiences into a coherent and nuanced personal narrative.

Chapter 5. Discussion

The results section above revealed five themes that emerged from participant narratives. The discussion below examines the current results in the context of existing literature.

Goal of Current Study

Considering the current study in the context of previous research, one of its goals has been to problematize the experience of the Brazilian immigrant woman, to complicate and unpack it in the face of often inconsistent or reductionistic prior psychological research, and to build on our existing knowledge of the lived experience of immigrants. In retaining an awareness of the situated nature of knowledge, and the importance of subjective experience, while at the same time delving into common universalities, the current project attempts to work on multiple levels of meaning, on the one hand remaining close to the data and allowing participants to convey their own meaning-making processes, but on the other hand moving beyond description to interpretation and reflection of the dialogue between participants among themselves as well as between participant experiences and existing research.

The participants in this study illustrate the complexity of lived experience and identity negotiation in the context of immigration. They discuss having endeavored a journey that started without the possibility of them truly knowing what to expect, indeed one which started perhaps with an underestimation of psychological or emotional factors while prioritizing financial or pragmatic concerns. Martes (2011) described similar findings in her longitudinal study of Brazilians in Massachusetts:

> In devising their plans to emigrate, Brazilians make selections (choose variables) in order to decide (the cognitive dimension) by calculating the cost-benefit relationship of the decision. They are modern emigrants: they make economic calculations to convince themselves that it is more worthwhile to go than to stay, and thus they bet on the new situation. In this calculus, the dimension of self-

> perception recurs frequently in the interviews…. At the moment of emigration, the social and affective dimensions are suppressed. Once the crossing is accomplished, however, even in they attain a relative degree of economic and material satisfaction fairly quickly, they see the clearer outline of economic motivation fade.

Women in the current sample describe a journey that developed into a dynamically changing sense of self affected not only by challenged expectations and external factors such as financial difficulties or shift in social status, but also by an internal re-evaluation of key aspects of how the self is defined.

Adaptation as a Dynamic Process

Throughout the interviews, the women discuss their immigration experiences as a dynamic process of personal transformation, in which they are consistently re-examining their position in the world and re-defining themselves.

The construct of acculturation has been studied in the field in an attempt to understand how individuals adapt to a new cultural context and the implications of that adaptation process to their psychological well-being. The narratives of the women in the current study lend support to the growing body of research indicating that acculturation cannot be measured linearly or unidimensionally, but is rather a complex and individualized process (Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2005; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007). Participants were not evaluated for how well they fit into Berry's (1997, 2005a) model, but based on their narratives it might be difficult at times to fit them neatly into his categories. Mariana and Kelsi, who identify themselves as sojourners rather than permanent residents and demonstrate a marked sense of otherness in the host cultural space, appear to fall into the *separation* category, although they certainly discuss an experience of being changed by their experience in the host culture. Rebeca indicating that she feels "like a mother with two children" suggests that she has employed an *integration* approach, maintaining intentional ties with both cultures and trying to make a

cohesive story out of this blend. However, even while fiercely defending her equal devotion to and identification with both countries, she describes the unresolvable dilemma of being perpetually divided between the two, hardly indicating the process to be easy or resolved. None of the women employed *assimilation* as a strategy, as all of them describe a strong bond with their native country, at times through a desire to return, at times through an emotional bond that transcends the desire to remain in the United States. Finally, none of the women appear to employ the *marginalization* strategy intentionally, by disengaging from both cultures; however, attempting to integrate both of their cultural experiences can lead to a sense of marginalization if there is a sense of not being able to return home or not being welcomed into the host culture. None of the women in the current sample described feeling that their culture of origin was not salient or not important to them, but many described feeling marginalized from their home culture nonetheless, in spite of their emotional connection to their home country.

According to Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008), what Berry terms as marginalization may actually be "cultural identity confusion" meaning that "what appears to be marginalization may actually represent a sense of discomfort or lack of clarity in terms of who one is as a cultural being" (p. 281). The authors also emphasize that Berry's categories may not be completely independent, as they found evidence of biculturalism (i.e. Berry's 'integration' strategy) having some overlap with both assimilation and separation. It may be, then, that some form of bicultural identity is normative for immigrants. Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005), in their exploration of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII), focus on the extent to which this bicultural identity is experienced as harmonious versus conflictual. In that case, the current study's participants may be showing us the conflict of the bicultural individual discussed by Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) in their exploration of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) as a concept. That is, in spite of participants' attempts to integrate their cultural experiences into a cohesive identity and sense of self, they differ in the extent to which the integration is harmonious.

The findings of the current study support previous research indicating that attempts to create a cohesive bicultural identity look different for different individuals, and that acculturation can vary by domains and over time (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007). Women in the sample described orienting themselves to American or Brazilian culture differently at different times and in different life domains. For example, Helena describes being involved in an American church and having friendships in that church, as well as feeling that the United States is her "home," but at the same time describes a sense of alienation from American culture and a lack of comfort with her English fluency. According to Rebeca, her coping strategies and mentality changed over time, at first seeing herself as a sojourner, but ultimately accepting in her mind the possibility of building a life here, which also indicates a sense of appropriation, with her feeling strong ties to both the home and host cultural space.

In addition to exploring the ways in which individuals can negotiate their bicultural identities over time and in different life domains, the current study also points to the importance of a sense of belonging as critical. The current study suggests that the extent to which an individual perceives oneself as experiencing legitimacy and belonging, and the extent to which the individual can feel enough agency to appropriate the cultural spaces in which she inhabits, may be meaningful factors in an individual's successful adaptation and psychological well-being.

According to Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005), "it is possible that for some biculturals… switching cognitive and behavioral frames in response to different cultural cues is accompanied by feelings of confusion regarding one's ability to maintain consistent, recognizable self-identities" (p. 1040). In their conceptualization of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII), the construct of BII is comprised of two independent components: cultural distance and cultural conflict. Cultural distance refers to the extent to which individuals view two cultures as "nonoverlapping, dissociated, and distant from one another" (p. 1040). Cultural conflict, on the other hand, refers to "the perception that mainstream and ethnic cultures clash with one another" (p. 1039) or "feeling caught or

trapped between one's two cultural orientations (p. 1022). Participants in the current sample indicated that they experienced both of these components in their experiences, but they also described another important aspect to their sense of meaning-making and identity, which was their sense of belongingness and the extent to which they felt able to appropriate their cultural spaces. Some concrete external variables contributed to this feeling of belongingness (or lack thereof), such as documentation status or English proficiency. However, women also demonstrated the power of the imaginary and the personal narrative in contributing to this sense of belonging, above and beyond other factors. For example, Cassandra describes laying claim to the United States in spite of a lack of documentation, and does so on the basis of her narrative that God is the rightful owner of the land. There was also an indication throughout the interviews that individuals may hold fantasies of their positionality relative to their home country, such as when Rebeca returned to Brazil with Barbie dolls and children's clothes for her adolescent daughters, or Luisa describing the home that is no longer home, upon return to the home country. Individuals may very well identify as "bicultural," but their identification may be based as much on their perceptions and personal narratives as on concrete of measurable aspects of culture acquisition, sometimes in spite of them.

According to Phinney (1999), "…increasing numbers of people find that the conflicts are not between different groups but between different cultural values, attitudes, and expectations within themselves" (p. 27).

Acculturation and Stress

According to Tosta (2004), "the immigrant is transformed" (p. 579) by the migration process. At times, the transformation that occurs in the acculturation process can be stressful. Acculturative stress has been associated in previous research with English proficiency, stress-coping resources, length of residence in the United States, family cohesion, differences in acculturation among family members, economic status, immigration status, and education (Meranda & Matheny, 2000; Thomas, 1995; Hervis et

al, 2009). A felt disparity or conflict between the two cultures can also be a factor in acculturative stress (Kim, 1988; Allen, Amason, & Holmes, 1998). The results of the current study are consistent with much of this research. Below is a discussion of the factors that were most salient for the current sample.

Participants in the sample indicate that lack of English proficiency can create a sense of alienation from the host culture, as well as a concrete barrier to personal autonomy. Women cited frustration and resentment at needing to ask for help from others, and discussed a felt lack of solidarity from their compatriots largely due to feeling taken advantage in this particular area of vulnerability. Kelsi discusses the fact that speaking English would give her more independence and the ability to take on her own cleaning jobs rather than work for a Brazilian boss; Rebeca discusses the early immigrant's experience of paying for help with shopping or communication with Americans. There is also a sense of shame that came up in the current sample, for example with Adriana, a way in which lack of English proficiency came to be internalized and contribute to a diminished sense of self. The current study, then, agrees with previous research about the stressful experience of not being linguistically proficient in the host culture. However, it also contributes depth and dimension to our understanding of the mechanism through which this stress becomes embodied in an individual's psyche and may contribute negatively to psychological well-being.

Greater length of time in the United States appeared to provide participants with some protective factors related to increased coping resources, greater English proficiency at times, greater insight and autonomy over their circumstances, and more developed support networks. Participants in the current study also discussed a progression in their coping strategies and adaptation over time. Rebeca, for example, describes the experience of arriving as a sojourner, expecting to stay for one year and return home with greater financial resources. She describes a process of disillusionment upon realizing that her goals would not be met within her timeline, followed by a period of intense focus on work to make up for lost time, and finally leading to the current stage in which she

decided to relax and build a life here, and in which she has been joined by her daughters. For Rebeca, time allowed her to attempt to make peace with the life she had chosen and live in the present moment, rather than live mentally in a mythical future while toiling ceaselessly in the present.

Across the sample, women rarely mentioned a focus on self-care. Rather, several discussed the emotional and physical tolls of their work including chronic arm pain, sacrificing any form of social life, and not seeing their children sometimes for years. Cassandra and Rebeca both describe the emotional burden of working to numb feelings of homesickness or pain. The unskilled physical labor that many of the women undertake, the intense work hours many perform in order to reach migration goals more quickly or to numb emotional pain, and the conditions they endure of being taken advantage of or humiliated as new immigrants, often while working with other Brazilians, may all contribute to acculturative stress.

In terms of family relationships, women in the current sample often described the immigration experience as a unifying one for their marriages, in which they and their husbands benefitted from having extended family farther away and not interfering, as well as from facing the immigration difficulties together. For women in the sample who left children in Brazil to immigrate into the United States, the fact that they had left their children presented itself as an intensely difficult and stressful emotional experience. For women who brought their children with them, uncertainty about their children's educational and employment prospects often arose in the context of lack of documentation status. Women also described a feeling of disconnection between themselves and their children, due to having a different relationship with the two cultures than their children. For example, Helena discusses struggling to have a "serious" discussion with her children because she stumbles as she attempts to speak to them in English, and Paula discusses a barrier to overcome in her son's recognition of the dignity of her work as an immigrant.

Participants in the current sample indicated that social support was of great importance and yet less available than they would have liked. They described immigration as a largely solitary experience. There was an overwhelming description of the lack of cohesion of the Brazilian community, which contributed to participants' sense of alienation. For those women who did experience a strong sense of social support, it emerged from individual relationships including family and select friendships, or family members who were also immigrants. Generally, there was little sense of group cohesion, except for a couple of women who described strong church affiliations. These results are consistent with past research on Brazilian communities which indicates a lack of community solidarity. According to Martes (2011), "…emigrants say that to be an immigrant is to learn to 'become alone'" (p. 230).

The extent to which women in the current sample feel a sense of autonomy and self-determination in their immigration experience appears related to their psychological well-being and positive sense of self. For example, Cassandra, who describes herself as a "warrior" and lays claim to the land in spite of her documentation status, demonstrates a much more positive sense of self than Mariana, who discusses feeling stuck in the United States and a deep sense of loss over her autonomy. Mariana discusses a fear of going out due to her documentation status, a sense of being "nothing" to the Americans, and describes feeling stuck in the United States to pay for her daughter's school. She is also adamant that she would not return to the United States were she to do it over, although she feels she cannot turn back now. Cassandra, on the other hand, discloses multiple disappointments and even a bout of depression during her immigration experience, but describes faith as a coping strategy, frames her stories in terms of victories rather than obstacles, and discusses her own sense of "[believing] in myself" rather than a sense of being tossed by life circumstances.

The current study demonstrates the extent to which an individual's internal world shapes their experiences of external factors such as documentation status and other potential stressors. Coping resources such as faith and social support certainly contribute

to an individual's resiliency, but so does their personal narrative as well as the way in which their experiences fit into that narrative. Documentation status emerged as an important area of identity negotiation for the current sample, consistent with past research (Meranda & Matheny, 2000). However, a potential stressor may be experienced in vastly different ways depending on the meaning of that issue to the individual. For some, lack of documentation and citizenship privileges represents an assault to their sense of self, including Mariana and Adriana. Others experience lack of documentation as an external barrier but not a threat to their sense of self, for example Helena, who discusses her fear of not renewing her license but does not discuss a parallel sense of diminishing self, or even of lessened sense of appropriation of the host cultural space, stating that she will only leave if "dragged by the hair." The current study thus finds some consistencies with previous research that indicates general associations between certain potential stressors and psychological well-being. However, it highlights the ways in which adjustment and well-being are deeply personal and idiographic, and that perceived stressors and barriers may be much more important than physical or even legal obstacles.

Multiple Identities Negotiated

Research indicates that there are multiple domains in which an immigrant's transformation can occur. The current study points to multiple role and identity shifts that may occur in the migration process. Below is a discussion of shifts in professional identity, feminine gender roles and female identity, and race and ethnicity. Participants in the current sample linked these shifts with their sense of legitimacy and belonging as well as with their negotiation of important relationships.

Shifts in Social Standing

The women in the current sample often described shifts in social status. On the one hand, they often experienced greater financial opportunity and higher standard of living, but on the other hand, most women also experienced a loss of standing

professionally. For Adriana, for example, the pain of her perceived lost professional possibilities is palpable.

Beserra (2003) found that Brazilian immigrants often struggle with a shift in social standing, as did Margolis (1994). Both researchers acknowledge the identity negotiation that necessarily follows. Margolis discusses coping strategies utilized by immigrant women working in the domestic sphere in New York City. She reports that women sometimes "deal with the loss of status by putting themselves in a sort of disassociative state while on the job" (p. 130), and that humor is also a common strategy. Indeed, Adriana in the current sample demonstrated humor throughout her interview, with laughter accompanying at times particularly painful aspects of her narrative. She also utilized humor when she teased her husband about being "Mexican." There was also some image management that appeared to play a role at times during the current interviews, to the interviewer, to others in the participants' lives, and even to the participants themselves. Helena routinely described her various trials as "no big deal," downplaying even her experience of abandoning an apartment to other immigrants, and declaring bankruptcy. Participants described the importance of having something to show for their time abroad, and a fear of returning to Brazil without enough to have made it appear worthwhile. The idea of work being a "dissociative state" is especially interesting in light of the stories told by several women including Rebeca and Cassandra, about their efforts to avoid emotional pain and thinking too much, by overworking.

This utilization of image management, work, and humor appear to be ways of counteracting negative emotions, preserving a sense of dignity, and creating a meaningful narrative as an agentic being. There may be a conflict between positive or light-hearted comments and their undercurrents of sadness. At the same time, this very discrepancy may be what allows women to experience and share their experiences of struggle and identity negotiation without becoming overwhelmed or consumed by those experiences, rather demonstrating resiliency, agency, and ownership over their own stories.

Women also demonstrate coping strategies as they negotiate shifts in social standing by shifting their narratives around the meaning of certain jobs. Paula provided us with a powerful example when she described the movement from not wanting to tell people in Brazil what she did, to being able to explain to her son the dignity of her labor. According to Martes (2011), based on her sociological study of Brazilian immigrants in the Boston area,

> Occupational status tends to be reinterpreted according to new criteria that permit the revaluing of certain occupations. Housecleaning is the area in which the revaluing of work is most significant because it permits the establishment of a business…. Brazilians have transformed housecleaning into a symbol of upward social mobility in the eyes of their compatriots.

Cassandra experiences a sense of dignity based on the dependence and trust that her bosses have on her. Other women in the sample often discuss the relative opportunities available to them, which makes the revaluing of their work possible and appealing. Paula even describes being invited to call herself a "businesswoman" by a friend while visiting Brazil. What Martes points to, and what the current study also demonstrates, is the fact that experiences are given meaning by the narratives attributed to them. While all of the participants in the current sample demonstrated a pursuit of dignity and meaning, their various narratives also demonstrated a range in the extent to which they were successful in creating cohesive, meaningful, and satisfying narratives. The current study suggests that the extent to which one can create such a narrative may have implications for one's psychological well-being more generally.

Role of Woman

Women in the current study generally describe the immigration experience as one that has offered them greater freedom from gender role expectations. The immigration experience was not independent of other factors which exert influence over this area,

however, such as church teachings, expectations of others, and even one's own expectations for oneself. Helena describes a gender role ideology which includes being submissive to her husband, as per church teachings. However, she points to an issue that the literature supports, which is the possible relationship between her traditional gender role ideology and the fact that she has not consistently worked outside of the home (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Min, 2001; DeBiaggi, 2002). Cassandra and Andrea both describe a greater sharing of household tasks in their marriages as part of their immigration experiences. Cassandra credits the distance of family members, and their expectations (i.e. her husband's mother), while Andrea credits the necessity based on a dual-earner household where she does not have the same availability in her time.

Research indicates that women who are employed and have families may experience role strain (Pleck, 1985, as cited in DeBiaggi, 2002). Indeed, women in the current sample described the difficulty of doing it all. This appeared to be a result not only of less than equal sharing of tasks between themselves and their husbands, but also a result of their own internalized expectations of themselves. When Bete discussed the difference between a man going to bed and a woman going to bed, picking up clutter and checking up on things along the way, she appeared to be referencing her own difficulty with allowing herself to rest. Certainly, this difficulty may be related to cultural expectations, as well as perhaps expectations of husbands, who feel at ease going to bed knowing their wife will pick up any loose ends, but it may be just as much related to the woman's internalized values. Cassandra references a running joke that she has with her sister about how women in her family do not know how to rest without a knitting needle in their laps.

This idea of the nurturing, perpetually dutiful, and available presence of the woman in the family that women in the sample sometimes appear to struggle with, appears related to the concept of *marianismo* as described by Baldwin and DeSouza (2001). The women in the sample may be struggling with what Gil and Vazquez (1997) termed *The Maria Paradox*, on the one hand appreciating important cultural values, while

on the other hand struggling to find a coherent identity that balances new experiences and cultural exposure.

Race and Ethnicity

According to Zubaran (2008), "Brazilians tend to conflate concepts such as race, ethnicity, and nationality, and generally identify by nationality over race" (p. 593). Mariana, in the current sample, used the same term cited by Margolis (1994), *raça*, when describing difficulties with working with other Brazilians, stating that at times there are conflicts "with our own race." The use of the wording "our race" in the context of discussing other Brazilians is very interesting in light of the conflicted racial discourse in Brazil. In 2006, during an orientation for my study abroad semester in Rio de Janeiro, the coordinator of the program stated, "There is no racism here. We are all Brazilians." This statement reflects the 'myth of racial democracy' which has characterized much of the discourse on race in Brazil historically. In Gilberto Freyre's (1933) *The Masters and the Slaves (Casa Grande e Senzala)*, he discusses the racial miscegination that occured among Portuguese colonizers, native Brazilians, and African slaves. Although he discusses the oppressive nature of this racial mixing, he also celebrates the cultural mixture that caracterizes Brazilian society. His work has been used to justify the "fable of the three races," a narrative of Portuguese colonizers, African slaves, and indigenous peoples creating the new Brazil together—a discourse which denies the basic power hierarchies which dominated these interacial interactions and mixing (Bailey, 2009; Nascimento, 2007). His work has been used to promote "a denial of the existence of racial prejudice and discrimination in Brazilian society, forming the basis of the myth of racial democracy" (Nascimento, 2007, p. 53). In essence, this idea of racial democracy idealizes racial mixing and espouses racial equality "conceptualizing all Brazilians as part of one and only one 'Brazilian' race, a legacy that lives on today despite the rise of the Afro-Brazilian movement" (Marrow, 2003, p. 440-441). Nascimento (2007) puts it well by saying that this discourse "transforms a social system composed of profound racial

inequalities into a supposed Paradise of racial harmony (p. 73). The "racial democracy" myth has been challenged and lost legitimacy by Brazilian scholars but nevertheless holds sway in the national discourse (Zubaran, 2008; Nascimento, 2007).

Many of the women in the current sample had difficulty defining their immigration experience in racial terms. They demonstrated a lack of awareness of the possible impact of their new social context in defining them racially or ethnically, but a great deal of awareness of the ways in which their identity as an immigrant shaped their daily lives. Many of them thus appeared to believe that the cultural component of their experience, coupled with their documentation status, defined their experience and their identity more than their racial/ethnic categorization within the United States. The lack of awareness of racial and ethnic issues may be due to immigrant status being more prominent, particularly for people who may not have had to think about race because they came from a place of relative racial privilege in their home country. Here they may be focused on ways in which issues such as type of employment, language proficiency, and nationality affects their sense of belonging. It may be that many of these women do not even consider the importance of naming themselves in racial terms.

For the women who did explicitly discuss their racial and ethnic experiences, they clearly indicated that there are striking differences between racial categorization in the United States and Brazil, and that they have difficulty identifying themselves in racial and ethnic terms in this new context. Bete discusses the difficulty of finding a classification for herself in a context which identifies race as binary, and feels herself as "the interval between" black and white, or *morena*. For her, to choose a label is to reduce herself to less than the fullness of her heritage. However, racial and ethnic labeling for Brazilian immigrants can also be threatening in that it means inserting oneself into stigmatized or marginalized categories. For Adriana, she seems to describe a loss of racial and ethnic privilege in the immigration process. She sees herself as white or nearly white, based on her experience in Brazil. According to Martes (2011), "while in the United States 'mixed-race' ('mulatto') is considered a subgroup of 'black,' I believe that

in Brazil *mulato* tends to be seen as a subgroup of 'white' or as another, separate category" (p.206). In contrast to the historical one-drop rule in the United States, Brazil has had a historical "culture of whitening" which glorifies racial mixing due to a presumed black inferiority (Nascimento, 2007).

For Adriana, she identified as white or almost white in Brazil, but in the United States finds herself associated with Spanish speaking immigrants and Mexicans in particular, a group she perceives to be less educated and more stigmatized in American society. She points to the issue of wishing to be distinguished as Brazilian, an issue which Margolis (1994) also noted in her research: "The effort of Brazilians to distinguish themselves linguistically and ethnically from other Latin American groups in [New York] city is partly rooted in cultural pride, in the uniqueness of their 'race' (*raça*), as they call it" (p. 244). Margolis also noted that this effort "stems from their own prejudice and elitism" (p. 245), which Adriana alludes to as well. On the one hand, Brazilian immigrants wish to be recognized for what they are, which is a unique cultural group. On the other hand, this differentiation at times is sought at least in part based on internalized stereotypes or prejudices against other cultural groups, as well as a reluctance to be reduced to a marginalized identity.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The Current Study

The Brazilian immigrant experience is one that is grossly understudied in psychological literature. Despite the fact that this group has a profile that is distinct from other Latin American groups, and has a significant presence in major cities such as Boston, New York and Miami, it is a group that is often not even recognized in mainstream society and has been termed "the invisible minority."

Most of the work that has been done on Brazilian immigrants has focused on the experiences of Brazilian immigrants in the Boston or New York area. While the current project includes participants living in the Greater Boston Area, it also includes immigrants living in Austin, Texas. The fact is that given the large percentage of undocumented individuals, it is difficult to effectively quantify the Brazilian immigrant presence in the United States. Although Boston, New York, and Miami are three of the major hubs for this immigrant group, there are Brazilian individuals and families scattered across the United States in perhaps unexpected places. Austin, Texas boasts such a presence, with at least two active Brazilian churches in addition to other community resources. The current research project aims to add to the existing (limited) interdisciplinary literature on the Brazilian immigrant experience, to highlight the particular lived experience of individuals from this cultural group living in the United States, and to include the experience of individuals both from the Greater Boston Area, a recognized Brazilian immigrant cultural hub, and individuals living in another part of the United States to allow their narratives to add richness and depth to our understanding of this immigrant group's experiences.

One of the things that women in this sample demonstrated is the fact that the details of their immigration experience, although deeply influential and important, were perhaps less important in terms of facts, than in terms of the meaning that women ascribed to their experiences as they constructed their narratives. Whereas Cassandra

defined each trial and tribulation as an opportunity to claim victory, confirm God's divine favor over her life, and propel her forward toward more conquests; Adriana described her trials as factors which led her to disillusionment and a sense of foreshortened future. The extent to which women felt a sense of agency in their lives was determined less by their documentation status or their goals, but the meaning that these aspects of their lives had for them. While Mariana states "this is not one's place for those of us who are not documented," Cassandra proclaims "this land does not belong to the Americans, it belongs to God." The power of a phenomenological approach is in recognizing that at times the very idiosyncratic nature of an individual's lived experience is what allows it to add richness, depth, and indeed truth to our understanding of a phenomenon in question.

Results in Context

The current study led to the elaboration of five emergent themes in the narratives of participants concerning their immigration experiences. These themes were tied together in the sense that they all pointed to ways in which the immigration experience has been transformative and required an ongoing negotiation of identity. They also point to the idea that adaptation to a new cultural context is a dynamic process.

The first theme discussed by the participants is that of immigration as a quest. Women discussed coming to the United States from Brazil with a purpose, a purpose which often shifted and which was met at both physical and psychological costs. Women described feeling that their expectations often did not match the reality of the experience and many times felt some form of disillusionment in the process.

The second theme discussed in the narratives of participants is that of having "one foot in each country" or having a divided self between the two cultures. Women discussed feeling divided for multiple reasons. They discussed a sense of attachment to both cultures, due to living here while imagining returning to Brazil, or to having children or other family members in Brazil with whom they are both psychologically and financially connected. They also described a sense of alienation from both cultures, and

alluded to the transformative power of knowledge, whereby knowing a second culture makes one unable to fully return home. Women thus pointed to a paradoxical sense of simultaneous attachment and otherness. Ultimately, there was also a sense that women had underestimated the emotional cost of their journey, while focusing on financial and other pragmatic gains, only later realizing other factors.

The third theme discussed was that of legitimacy and belonging. Women described the ways in which their documentation status, race/ethnicity, and social status affected their sense of legitimacy and belonging (or not). Undocumented status was often described as contributing to a sense of psychological and physical restriction, fear, and vulnerability. However, it was also clear that personal narratives differed as to the meaning of these factors. While some women described a diminished sense of self partly due to barriers of documentation, others described feeling relatively unaffected by issues of documentation, or buffering themselves with coping skills such as faith, or finding dignity in their labor. Women often described their cultural adaptation without touching on race and ethnicity specifically. When they did, however, it became clear that issues of self-definition are very present for them, and difficult to accomplish in a cultural context which recognizes race as a binary construct. Women described feeling conflicting experiences of shift in social status, on the one hand experiencing more upward mobility financially, while on the other hand often doing relatively unskilled labor relative to their training or employment in Brazil.

The fourth theme that emerged from the current data is that women utilize a variety of coping strategies during the immigration process, including finding dignity and purpose, utilizing work both to reach their goals and as a coping strategy to escape painful feelings, and leaning on their faith. Throughout the interviews and across the themes, women showed meaning-making strategies, in which their personal narratives reflected attempts at synthesizing and creating a coherent whole out of their sometimes painful, sometimes positive, but always complex experiences. The extent to which women were able to appropriate their experiences and feel ownership over the space they

occupy, both physically in this country and emotionally in their lives, appeared to have implications for psychological well-being.

The final theme that emerged in this study is the ongoing process of negotiating relationships. Women often described a lack of solidarity in the Brazilian community and a disappointment and frustration with their compatriots in general, due to having a lack of time for socialization, feeling unsupported or deceived, or feeling explicitly exploited. The church emerged as one stable support system for a couple of women, as did marriages and families. Overall, however, women described feeling that, emotionally, the immigration experience is a solitary endeavor emotionally. Women described a pressure to fit multiple roles, even while they described some emancipation from traditional gender roles. They also discussed a feeling of disconnection between themselves and their children. For women who left children in Brazil, they discussed the loss of a crucial bond. For women who raised children in the United States, there was a barrier either linguistically or culturally that was sometimes alluded to.

The current study adds to our understanding of the adaptation experience of Brazilian immigrant women, and the ways in which these women negotiate their multiple identities. It is consistent with past research that shows acculturation to be a multidimensional and individualized process. The current study also suggests that the individualized process does not only involve differences in how the individual creates the mosaic of their bicultural identity, but also differences in their narratives and the meaning they ascribe to their experiences. Women in the sample who arrived with the expectation to return to Brazil appear to experience more conflictual adaptation processes, as they realize that their goals have not been realized or that it is impossible to return "home" due to changes in the self or in the home country. Also, women's stories of tragedy and disillusionment, compared with stories of victory, appear to differentiate themselves from each other more by women's ownership of their narratives and meaning-making than by specific external or situational factors. Finally, women discuss the experience of

realizing the emotional and physical tolls of immigration over time, perhaps downplaying or naively disregarding them at first in light of expected financial gains.

The current study is consistent with past research which indicates that Brazilian immigrants often face a shift in social status, which challenges their sense of self. Women in the current study also describe negotiating gender roles, which supports and adds to previous work on the relationship between acculturation, work, and gender roles. Finally, the current study points to the complex relationship that Brazilian immigrants have with their racial and ethnic identities, which supports and adds to previous literature on the subject.

However, the majority of past research with Brazilian immigrants has come from fields outside Psychology, notably Anthropology and Sociology. The current study thus adds to the psychological literature on Latin American immigrants while focusing on a particular growing group which is relatively understudied in our field. This study also represents a contribution to the current literature on Brazilian immigrants in that it includes participants from Texas, whereas the majority of the current literature focuses on individuals residing in New York, Miami, and the Greater Boston Area.

Clinical Implications

The results of the current study, while not generalizable to all members of this cultural group, can certainly inform our understanding of possibilities for how patients from this group seeking mental health treatment might be making sense of their experiences.

Across the themes discovered in the course of data collection and analysis, ran a superordinate theme of a tension between self-definition and definition of self by others. Women described on the one hand struggling to define themselves, and on the other feeling themselves defined by external forces (by the expectations of others in their lives, documentation status, etc). Women's self-reported disillusionment or sense of peace was often described in relation to the extent to which they were able to construct meaning and

purpose in their lives, through a process of self-definition and reclaiming of their narrative. In considering the role of the mental health provider in treating this population, it appears that it would be of utmost importance to assess the extent to which a client feels agency in her life. A key focus of treatment may be to help a client create meaning from even her painful experiences, and to assess coping mechanisms currently being employed and the extent to which they are serving the client.

Women consistently described their experiences in terms of their positionality relative to others in their lives, disclosing a sense of isolation as central to the immigrant experience, as well as the importance of navigating relationships. It may be important for mental health providers to assess the extent to which a client's presenting issues arise from an internal conflict (divided self, regret) or relational conflict (rift with family members, marginalization in society, experienced prejudice). It may also be crucial to assess the presence of support systems and help a client make use of existing networks as well as establish meaningful connections.

Women also described different struggles depending on what part of their journey they were in. Women described initial difficulties followed by adaptation and attachment to the United States, leading ultimately to re-negotiation of their goals and identities in relation to both countries. Clinicians may do well to explore with clients what stage they feel they are in regarding their immigration experiences, and the ways in which they are navigating the realities experienced relative to their expectations, as well as the ways in which their initial goals are being revised.

As clinicians working with immigrant clients, it is important to be aware of our own positionality relative to the client. Women in the current sample reported complex relationships with not only people of their own culture, but also American society. It is important to assess the possible transferential and countertransferential dimensions of the therapeutic interaction, and to have a willingness to explore these issues with the client.

Future Research

The current study attempts to further our understanding of the lived experience of a group of Brazilian immigrant women in Austin, Texas and the Greater Boston Area. The focus is on individual narratives, and the dialogue among the narratives, which may limit generalizability of the results. The exploratory nature of this research precludes it from making definitive statements about the experiences of Brazilian immigrants in general, although it does inform us as to what themes may be meaningful to pursue in further research. Further research should be done on the links between coherency and sense of agency in personal narratives, and psychological well-being. Further psychological literature should include longitudinal work and continue to explore the ways in which coping strategies, meaning-making, and psychological well-being compares across different stages of the immigration experience.

One aspect of the immigration experiences of the participants in the current project that stuck out was the importance of the imaginary and their experience of an internal fantasy or narrative that defined their view of their host and home cultures as well as their positionality relative to those two worlds. Future research would do well to expand on our understanding of the immigrant's experience of the dream. Franconi discusses Brazilian immigrants sometimes being "trapped in [their] own dream, unable to confront the reality of [their] surroundings" (2005, p.727). The current project touches on a similar theme of participants being propelled by an internal construction: for example, the dream of returning to their old lives, or of reuniting with loved ones, or of gaining a certain social and economic mobility. Future work could explore the ways in which the nature of an individual's dream, or fantasy, relates their psychological well-being. While a qualitative approach could exlore what kinds of different dreams individuals have, a quantitative approach could investigate the links between particular categories of dreams and psychological well-being. For example, it may be that people who do not fully embody their lives in the United States, but rather live with their minds on a dream of an unchanged homeland as their goal, experience more feelings of

dissociation or depression, relative to individuals with more realistic dreams, or individuals who embody their lives more fully.

Appendix

Interview Schedule

1) Tell me a bit about your life before coming to the United States?
2) Tell me about the process of deciding to come to the United States?
    a. How did the idea arise? What were your considerations?
    b. What were your plans and expectations?
3) Tell me a bit about your experience as an immigrant?
    a. How did it compare with your expectations?
    b. How has it affected your relationships?
4) How has the immigration experience affected how you see yourself?
    a. How has the immigration experience affected how you feel seen?
    b. How has the immigration experience affected how you see the world?
5) What has been your experience as a woman?
6) What has been your experience in terms of race and ethnicity?
7) What are your plans currently?

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Vita

Luana Barbosa Bessa began her graduate work in 2007 at the University of Texas at Austin, where she obtained a M.A. in Program Evaluation and is receiving a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology as well as a Portfolio in Women's and Gender Studies. The current dissertation represents the culmination of her Ph.D. work. Over the course of her training, research has been an opportunity to engage with areas of interest including gender issues, multicultural issues, resiliency, and the needs of underserved populations. Research has also been an opportunity to further her professional competency, contribute to ongoing dialogues in the field, and inform her clinical practice. She sees research and clinical work as two sides of the same coin, and thus has strived to make both key aspects of her training.

During her graduate career, Ms. Bessa has worked closely with faculty advisors as well as collaborated with fellow students. The sum of these experiences have enriched both her clinical and research endeavors. She looks forward to continuing to investigate issues of transition, identity and meaning-making over the course of her professional career.

Permanent Email Address: LBessa1@Utexas.edu
This dissertation was typed by the author.